

Window on Jordan

Are you bored to death?

By Rasheed Al Roussan
Special to The Star

YOU ARRIVE at home after a hectic day at work. You take off your shoes and put your feet up. You drink your coffee, turn on the TV set and watch for hours until your eye balls blow up. There is nothing new. Even your favorite programs are becoming more boring than ever!

Afterwards, you decide to phone your friends for dinner, but no one seems to be interested. It's a cold night, and everyone wants to stay at home. Well, how about reading a few magazines, or a book perhaps? No way! Your mind needs some rest, and you aren't ready for any intellectual stimulation this time

of day.

Do you go through this monotonous routine every day? If you do, then you are in deep trouble. You are simply heading towards a psychological state of boredom! But not to worry. Back in the US, a man by the name of Alan Caruba realized the impending psychological and social effects of this phenomenon, and proceeded to establish The Boring Institute, which he did in as early as 1984!

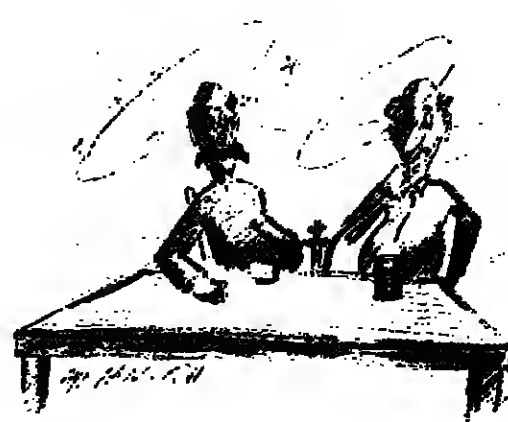
The year's worst actors, worst movies, and worst features are among the institute's annual publications. However, the publications are anything but boring!

In fact, statistics are showing vital facts which

people are becoming aware of today. Caruba believes that "extended boredom is a major warning sign of problems that include anti-social behavior and suicide. An estimated number of 2,000 youngsters [in the US] drop out of school every day, and boredom is among the most frequently cited reasons given," says Caruba. Rash killings by children, suicide and various diseases may simply be the result of being bored to death!

Moreover, the institute is keen on giving suggestions for curing boredom, like helping youngsters to realize the advantages of studying: "TV sucks".

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The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

Le Jourdain
Supplément en français du Star

● Bill Clinton à Gaza
● Wye, avec un point d'interrogation

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AMMAN, 17 23 DECEMBER 1998, VOLUME 9, NUMBER 28, 350 FILS

أسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

Damascus meeting travel ban draws fire

By Ibtisam Awadaf
Star Staff Writer

THE RIGHT to move freely is embedded in the Constitution. A delegation opposed to the peace agreements with Israel was banned from leaving for Damascus to participate in a conference by Palestinian opposition groups last week.

The two-day venue was to protest the Palestine National Authority's decision to cancel the causes in the National Charter which call for the destruction of Israel.

The conference took place in Damascus with the participation of 300 Palestinian, Arab and Muslim figures representing all the political parties opposed to the peace process.

From Jordan, 67 personalities were invited to participate in the different sessions, 15 to 20 of whom were invited as observers.

On Friday, just one day before the conference was held, 47 of those attending were denied to cross the Jabar border and returned to Amman. In solidarity with them, the rest of the delegates also refused to travel to Syria.

"The purpose behind organizing the event was to counter the pressure imposed by Israelis to get more Palestinian concessions," said Bahjat Abu Gharbeyeh, head of the preparatory committee of the conference.

"The powers of rejection and resistance—as I call them—needed to meet and declare their stance concerning what the PNA is doing," he said. Abu Gharbeyeh told The Star that the second goal of the conference, which it managed to carry out, was to consolidate the relation between the powers of the Palestinian resistance.

"A committee was formed from conference delegates to carry this out," Abu Gharbeyeh, head of the Jordanian delegation who was also banned from attending, believes that the Damascus conference succeeded in attracting public opinion to the opposition while another objective was reached by gathering Arab and Islamic activists to discuss a national affair.

Press reports covering the conference suggested that there were major differences between participants, but Abu Gharbeyeh

described these reports as inaccurate. "It was a difference in opinion expressed by one of the members but eventually the decisions were taken unanimously."

Officials since said one of the reasons of disallowing these people to attend was to do with security considerations following information claiming that the interest of Jordan would be threatened.

Minister of Information Nasser Judeh, in his weekly meeting with the press, said the decision is in line with Jordanian sovereignty, and not a political reaction.

One of the Palestinian figures who was forced to return back was Layla Khalid who was heading by plane to Lebanon to participate in the second Arab meeting following the Peking women's conference.

"It's the first time that officials at an airport carry out a personal check which I refused

to submit to," Khalid said.

"The Constitution guarantees the freedom of movement and the right to free political expression to all citizens," Khalid bitterly described her stop at the airport as "a deliberate harassment, I was obliged to leave the plane minutes before it took off, my luggage was also checked repeatedly."

"It was an intentional violation against me." It was only after direct intervention from the Women National Committee that she was allowed to travel, but the conference was going to end soon, she told The Star.

"According to local and the International Aviation and Travel Association laws no one can force any passenger from leaving a plane except at the discretion of the captain, who has to be sure that the passenger is wanted for a criminal offence," Khalid stressed, "I believe both conditions don't

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Cancerous bread additives provoke public worry

Star Staff Writer

CONTAMINATED WATER, how it is contaminated bread! Days before the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, the case of contaminated additives added to the dough for making bread and pastries continues to occupy the public's mind.

Following the closure of three bakeries on the charge of using carcinogenic additives in bread and pastry, the public and Lower House deputies began to take much interest in the story, one which was broken by Al-Dustour daily newspaper.

The government was asked by Mohammed Azzaydeh, head of the Public Freedoms Committee (PFC) to release more information regarding the latest bread issue.

Meanwhile, doctors warned people from using such additives, which may cause fatal diseases, including cancer. Dr. Sami Khameis, specialist in cancer tumors, explained that the "Stiffard" is a chemical substance which is added to improve the color and taste of bread. However, this substance was prohibited in Jordan 10 years ago, after discovering that it causes cancer.

The General Syndicate of Bakers' Owners (GSBO) pointed out that all bakeries are up to the required hygienic standards concerning the production of bread and pastries.

Abdelkhalq Hamawi, head of the GSBO, emphasized that the accused bakeries are not members of the syndicate.

Furthermore, Dr. Abdel Razzaq Nsour, supporter of the Health Committee of the Lower House is carrying out intensive contacts with officials to clarify the stance of the government towards this issue.

Previously, Former Minister of Health Dr. Abdel Rahim Mahas warned of another important topic which is related

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US Navy technicians check aircraft on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise while cruising at sunset. The US is gearing up for a possible US attack on Iraq.

Reuters

Clinton's visit to the region creates emotional bond

By combined news agencies

THE THREE-day visit of US President Bill Clinton to the Middle East ended Tuesday in emotional failure. Although he failed in bringing the Palestinians and Israelis closer together, he gave impetus to a future Palestinian state. And in an attempt to salvage the peace process, President Clinton kept returning to the same plea: Retribution should give way to compromise.

Clinton couldn't persuade Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to meet the 18 December deadline to withdraw additional troops from the West Bank, as mandated under the Wye accord. Netanyahu insisted at first that the Palestinians should fulfill a long list of commitments, and rejected a compromise on the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails. The issue of Palestinian detainees is highly charged for both sides.

Although Palestinians expected many of their political prisoners to be freed, Israeli officials have freed only common criminals so far.

However, President Clinton said he believes that the lines of communication between Israelis and Palestinians are open again after breaking down over many recriminations and alleged violations of the agreement.

His remarks came soon after a summit that Clinton held with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Netanyahu, in hopes of boosting the US-brokered land-for-security accord.

Israeli and Palestinian officials, however, portrayed a far bleaker picture. President Arafat left the meeting early in sultry face, and the three leaders did not issue a joint scheduled press conference or even appear together.

Moreover, Netanyahu handed Clinton a 12-point list

of commitments he claimed that Palestinians have failed to live up to. Palestinian officials later accused the Israelis of procrastination and sabotage.

Earlier, Clinton toured the Strip and met with Palestinian children, an emotional stop for the world's greatest man on the earth.

By the time 11-year-old Nihad Zakout met Clinton on Monday, tears were common in their eyes. She told the President that her father spent over 10 years in Israeli jails because of fighting the Israeli aggression. "I told him that peace has no taste while I am deprived of his caring and love. I asked the President, if he can live without his daughter for a minute," said Nihad in an interview. She said that Clinton promised to help get her father released.

In a speech later that day, Clinton said that his meeting with Zakout and three other young Palestinians had been

profoundly emotional, as he met 24 hours earlier with children of Israelis said that they had died in attacks by militant Palestinians.

"We have to find a way for both sets of children to get their lives back and go forward. If they had all been lined up in a row and I had seen their tears, I could not tell whose father was dead and whose father was in prison."

Clinton's comments got an uproar reaction from Netanyahu, who expressed his profanity and said that, "there is a world of difference between the children of murderers who are in jail and the children of those who are murdered."

The tension reflects the ongoing political turmoil in the Israeli leadership. Last Tuesday, strong news rushed in from Jerusalem and affirm that Israeli Minister of Finance Yacov Neeman intends to resign his post this week. The news came in favor of analysts saying that the dominant motivating force behind Netanyahu's aggressive positions featured from the right-wing parties.

A vote-of-confidence session is expected to be held this week in the Knesset, as the Israeli government shows defiance to Clinton's visit. The no-confidence vote would force for new general elections early next year.

However, President Clinton did accomplish a specific goal of his trip. As required by the agreement, he traveled to Gaza City on Monday and witnessed the decision of the Palestine National Council to annul clauses in its charter. Netanyahu didn't anticipate the pagentry of the first visit to Palestinian territory of a sitting US President.

Before returning home, President Clinton decided to leave policies for a while and toured with his family the Gaza Strip and West Bank city of Bethlehem.

In Bethlehem, the family prayed, decorated a Christmas tree in the Manger Square, and sang carols with Palestinian

Strike against Iraq imminent after Butler's report

By Star Staff Writer and agencies

A US strike against Iraq seems imminent. Iraq has failed to cooperate fully with the team of arms experts, claimed the UN Chief weapons inspector Richard Butler. Baghdad has not lived to its promise to give unconditional access to UN inspectors trying to determine if Iraq abandoned its biological, chemical and nuclear weapons programs.

Weapons inspectors were early Wednesday en route to the airport for an evacuation from Iraq—a necessary step in any American military attack.

UN sources said a plane which can accommodate the roughly 120 weapons inspectors arrived Wednesday morning from Bahrain to evacuate the inspectors.

The United States and Britain have warned they could launch airstrikes without warning, declaring that Iraq had "initiated new forms of restrictions," the United Nations' chief weapons inspector concluded Tuesday that President Saddam Hussein had failed to restore full cooperation with arms monitors.

The 10-page report which was sent to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was distributed later to Security Council members.

The report mentioned the possibility of sudden attacks by US and British military forces. The report also presented the Security Council with a negative assessment that could curtail any review designed to possibly lift the sanctions that have crippled Iraq's economy.

In a blunt language, Richard Butler, said that "despite the prospect of a comprehensive review, Baghdad's conduct ensured that no progress can be made in either the fields of disarmament or accounting for its prohibited weapons programs."

"In the absence of full cooperation by Iraq, it must regretably be recorded again that the commission is not able to conduct the substantive disarmament work mandated to it by the Security Council and thus to give the council the assurances it requires with respect to Iraq's prohibited weapons programs," Butler concluded.

The United States and Britain have previously argued that they have the authorization they require from the council to launch a military attack.

President Clinton, who returned to Washington late Tuesday from a three-day trip to the Middle East, spent much of the flight discussing the report with senior staff, a senior US official said, adding that Clinton and his advisers will meet Wednesday to evaluate the situation.

The report "clearly says there's a failure to cooperate—and worse. Iraq has imposed new restrictions," the US official said. "We consider this as a very serious matter." White House spokesman P.J. Crowley said.

One administration official declined to respond directly to rumors circulated by British diplomats at the United Nations that the United States might undertake military action against Iraq within the next few days. "I'm not going to speculate on what decision the president may make," the official said.

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Palestinians see a more balanced approach by Clinton

By Howard Schneider

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—After years of complaining about what they perceive as American bias toward Israel, Palestinians were buoyed this week by the visit of a US president who—at least for the moment—seemed to equate their struggle for a homeland with that of their historic rival. It was reported in the LA Times-Washington Post News Service.

Though President Clinton's three-day trip to Israel, Gaza and the West Bank left unresolved the most difficult issues in the Middle East peace process, analysts and commentators in Israel and the Arab world agreed that the results were unambiguous in boosting the Palestinian struggle for recognition and eventual statehood. While no one suggested the United States was in any way diminishing its longstanding support for Israel, Clinton's remarks in Gaza on Monday were an "assertion of Palestinian rights, and will hopefully be translated into full

support for Palestinian independence," said Nasser Qidweh, the Palestinian representative to the United Nations.

"We are profoundly affected and touched by the sincerity of the respect he professes for the Palestinian people, and his readiness to support us," read a front page editorial in the Palestinian newspaper Al Hayat Al Jadida. "We perceive in your visit a great symbol of hope in the future."

"Palestinians have never been viewed as equal people in the United States. It has always been the Israeli people versus the Palestinian 'problem,'" said James Zogby, president of the Washington-based Arab American Institute. In remarks to a meeting of Palestinian leaders, Clinton "talked with such feeling about the Palestinian reality, their history, dispossession and dispersal," their aspirations," said Zogby, who attended the speech.

"People were silent in the ball... No one has ever said those things before and there was sort of an ecstatic but numb sense like, 'My God, he's talking about us'."

The spirit both in Clinton's speech to the Palestinians, and in earlier remarks to an Israeli crowd at the Jerusalem Convention Center was one of generosity and rapprochement, a call for both sides to look beyond the details and find common ground.

But the battle to define the meaning of Clinton's trip—and especially his visit to Gaza on Monday—was immediately joined, with Israelis in particular feeling they faced a serious public relations defeat. In Israel's 50-year history, its closest ally and principal financial benefactor has been the United States. Following Clinton's speech in Gaza, US officials carefully noted that nothing Clinton said or did in his visit here diminished that relationship.

Still, Clinton's remarks in Gaza were bound to please Palestinians. He expressed empathy for Palestinian concerns about new Jewish settlements, asserted that peace in the region requires "legitimate rights for Palestinians" and concluded that "neither side has a monopoly on pain or virtue."

"The Palestinian people stand at a crossroads," Clinton said. "Behind you a history

of dispossession and dispersal, before you the opportunity to shape a new Palestinian future on your own land." It looked like a state visit and it sounded like a state visit. For many Israelis and their American supporters, that was a problem. "The US has been married at the hip to both parties in the peace process," said Abraham Foxman, head of the Anti-Defamation League in New York, but "that should not replace or substitute for a 50-year relationship with moral and historical and strategic and cultural values... Balance is silly and counterproductive."

Israeli press commentators Tuesday drew parallels between Clinton's speech and the 1917 Balfour Declaration, an act of British diplomacy that laid the groundwork for the founding of Israel four decades later. Given the pace of events, they suggested, a Palestinian state might emerge much more quickly.

"For the first time ever [Clinton] equated the suffering, fears and aspirations of the Palestinians with the suffering, fears and

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World REPORT

09.12.1998



By Lubna Khader
Star Staff Writer

YEARS AGO, Jordanian women worked alongside their male partners to overcome the harsh economic realities. Such work became more institutional as such years went by.

In this respect, a center was established by housewives and unemployed women in an attempt to make them more productive members of society.

The center was established in Zarqa in 1986 by UNRWA

to assist Palestinian refugees to become self-sufficient. "Our goal is to make the members of the center feel they are productive and not a burden on their families," said Miss Rasmeya Al Khateeb, member of the local committee at the center.

"At the beginning, we only offered sewing courses. Afterwards, we expanded our program to include computer, typing skills, handicraft, makeup and fitness courses," Al Khateeb added.

"Our design for handicrafts and needle work is inspired by Palestinian folklore," Al

Khateeb said. "We believe that this folklore is our national heritage which we should protect and improve."

The different products of the center are displayed through independent exhibitions.

"Courses in general, last between three to four months, and the fees are nominal," Al Khateeb explained. "We also work on developing social programs such as combating illiteracy, and providing social and psychological support," said Ms Hanna Za'tara, secretary of the committee.

"We give women small loans to start their own projects, as a way to develop the living standards of their families," Za'tara added that the center aims at rehabilitating the women to assist their husbands.

"UNRWA is planning to open other similar centers in the near future but it is still awaiting financial support for this purpose," Za'tara told *The Star*.

Through a guided tour of the different sections, it was clear that the center has women from different age groups who are busy learning

various skills.

In the Computer Section, Tahani Lorfi is in the middle of a computer course. She hopes that this training will enable her to find a job.

"I feel very comfortable here, three months ago I was afraid to touch a computer, now I almost know everything about its different functions," Tahani said proudly.

In the Sewing Section, Eman who comes from the Zarqa Camp said, "We learn the basic lines in sewing, I spent about six months on this course." Eman can now make and sew different designs, and is capable of producing the latest trends in fashion.

People from different areas in Zarqa and as far as Yajouz come to take part in the program.

Manal Al Abed who works as a supervisor in the Makeup Section said that following 12 months of training which consist of two courses—each of a six months duration—the section graduated many make up artists.

"Four months ago, I weighed 84 kilos, now, I weigh 56 kilos," said Reema



Handicrafts on display

proudly. "I spend one hour of exercises daily in addition to the diet I am committed to," Reema, who joined the fitness course four months ago,

added. Saja Al Majali explained that all the necessary workout machines are available for the fitness courses. "Training

lessons last between 1 to 2 hours everyday," and it is usually the most crowded part of the center, Al Majali concluded.

JMA puts the brakes on

Star Staff Writer

Unity doctors, this week, took a major step to protect their association against any attempt to normalize relations with Israel. During a meeting at the Jordan Medical Association (JMA), doctors inserted a conditional

clause concerning the right of non-foreign doctors to practice medicine in the Kingdom and join the JMA.

Jordanian doctors adjointed an additional clause to one of the articles which stated that "Jewish and Israeli doctors would not be allowed to regis-

ter as part of the foreign doctors who are allowed to practice medicine in the Kingdom.

"This is along with the decision of the general assembly to combat normalization with Israel," said Dr. Haider Al Madani, the rapporteur of the Legal Committee at the DA.

Madani denied any Israeli attempt to register doctors under the umbrella of the Jordanian association. "However, by taking this step, we are closing the door to any future attempts at normalization," Madani told *The Star* that the recent step was taken as a purely precautionary act.

The point was raised by Dr. Jamal Bani Hani, head of the sub-committee of the JMA in Irbid. "During our discussions of the association law I realized that article eight of the law concerning foreign doctors is flexible," Bani Hani told *The Star*. "The article permits registered doctors in their countries of origins to become members at the JMA." However, Bani Hani said that this latest decision will prevent any

Israeli doctor from coming to the association asking for permission to open a clinic in one of the areas in Jordan.

"The assembly voted for this unplanned suggestion," Dr. Madani explained, adding that the association has again demonstrated its aversion to normalization.

"Government attempts are ongoing to encourage doctors to follow in their steps," adding "that doctors in the government sector have no choice but to deal with the Israeli doctors." However, he added that it is different for doctors in the association, who are "not obliged to normalize."

Madani said that the JMA had already boycotted a conference organized in Amman recently, where there was Israeli participation. Madani concluded that they will continue to fight any attempt to create normal relations with someone who occupies a part of our land and continues to practice all the Zionist acts against our people in Palestine.

Are you bored to death?

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"sleep early," and "read more." In addition, there are annual guides to the worst films or actors of the year.

Next to this well-known institute is the National Anxiety Center. What is fascinating about this establishment is this Year's Most Dubious News Stories. Starting with Bill Clinton's bilarious sex scandals, lies about global warming, confirmed deaths by eating peanuts, and ending with false alarms about asteroids bumping into earth.

All in all, 1998 seems to be a hideous year of scandals and celestial mambo jumbo circling the earth.

Now, take this phenomenon and apply it to Jordan, and what do you get? Boredom and anxiety!

Nevertheless, I believe that there is no proof of boring activities in the Kingdom, who needs them anyway? We have a lot of "important" things to do: time-consuming coffee shops, jammed Internet cafes, dying intellectual and artistic activities, contaminated water and bread, and people awaiting for political and social reform. That is worth wasting your time on, isn't it?

Well, how about forming a small group of complainers? Hey, complainers, are you bored with governments, work, family affairs, or friends? Not to worry, just hold your head up high, and shout, the sky is the limit!

Clinton's visit creates emotional bond

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students. While in Gaza, First Lady Hillary Clinton visited with her daughter Chelsea and Mrs. Arafat, a special center for women and children relief. She said that the US will give \$73 million aids to the center.

As the Clintons flew home, President Clinton hoped he could salvage his presidency from the impeachment case in Washington, with an appeal to precisely the same theme he came in to the Middle East.

"We are told that they who judge without mercy will be judged without mercy. But mercy triumphs over judgment."

Cancerous bread

Continued from page 1

to the bread issue. He explained that the amount of additives added in pastry products is often over-dosed, eventually, large amounts of flavors and colors may result in cancer.

Head of the National Society for Consumer Protection (NSCP), Mohammed Obaidat, said that the National Society had previously warned, one year ago, from fatal doses, which contain illegal additives. On the other hand, the government announced that the

price of one kilogram of bread will decrease to 15 piasters as from the start of Ramadan.

This decline is attributed to the lowering of international prices of wheat, and as a reply to public ongoing complaints of high prices.

The rising prices of bread took place in 1996, at a time when Abdel Karim Kabariti was Prime Minister. Prices then was raised at one stroke from 7.5 piasters to 22. Afterwards, it dropped to 20 piasters pair one kilo.

Prince Hassan reiterates Jordan's role in final talks

AMMAN, (Petr)—His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent reiterated Jordan's keenness to push the peace process forward to establish comprehensive peace on all tracks including the Syrian and the Lebanese ones.

In a joint press conference with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, the Regent stressed the need to take into account Jordan's vital interests in the final status negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel noting the importance of the issues on the agenda particularly those related to refugees, water, security and Jerusalem.

"We don't view the final status as an accumulation of events but we see the next phase as a new chapter in terms of discussing the future of the region in the next millennium," Prince Hassan said.

The Crown Prince praised the role of US president Bill Clinton in helping to push the peace process forward.

He said that "in terms of the communications that we have seen over the past few days, indeed with Prime Minister Tawfiq Yassir, I would like to emphasize the importance of the achievement in demystifying some of the key issues," like the question of prisoners and the question of security.

He said that "People want to know, mothers want to know what is the future of their children."

Commenting on the final status negotiations, the Regent said in American football idiom, "we are not talking here on quarter final, semi final and possibly final final status when we speak about overarching issues. Quite frankly with all due respect to President Clinton, to the American administration, to the government of Israel and indeed to our Palestinian brethren, when you talk about issues such as refugees, water, security, Jerusalem, you are talking about an overarching issues. The Jordanian peace treaty calls upon us to involve and involve Jordanian interest when it comes to many of these issues."

Prince Hassan said, "We have an involvement in terms of final status issues when they arise and once again we do not see the final status as an accumulation of events. We see the next year as a new chapter in terms of discussing not the interim of the interim but in discussing the future of this region into the next millennium."

"When we talk about the comprehensive solution we are talking about the participation of all including the Syrian and the Lebanese. We talk about the effective role of Egypt," Prince Hassan said.

In reply to a question on weapons of mass destruction in the region, Prince Hassan said this is an issue that involves the entire region and not only one single country. "We are speaking about weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems in a number of countries." The most recent dismay to all of us was the nuclear explosions in both India and Pakistan, he said. "I want to say that this country (Jordan) is central to the region. We live in a killing zone. I have watched with interest our Israeli interlocutor talking about the distribution of new gas masks, we do not even all have gas masks," Prince Hassan said.

Albright said that during the meeting with Prince Hassan she discussed President Clinton's historic visit to Gaza and his very productive meetings with both Palestinian and Israeli leaders.

"I took the opportunity to reiterate our admiration for the courageous role played by his Majesty King Hussein and the government of Jordan in support of the Middle East peace process," she said. "In fact without King Hussein's presence at Wye, I think we would not have gotten this far."

"By striving to heal the divisions that have tormented this region so long, Jordan has made many friends in the United States and earned the admiration of the world," Mrs. Albright said. "The admiration certainly extends to Crown Prince Hassan because of the superb leadership he has shown both domestically and internationally during the King's illness," she added.

"We pray for the King for his health and for his return to his people here in Jordan, but we are also very grateful for the Crown Prince's experience, strength and vision," Secretary Albright said.

...discussed with the Crown Prince our intent to obtain \$200 million for security assistance to Jordan in addition to our annual economic and military assistance program for which we will seek \$225 million in the coming year," she added.



Christmas Lunch

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Travel ban draws fire from foes

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apply in my case."

Khalid, who believes that the conference organized in Damascus and the public meetings in Gaza and Ramallah by independent political figures and opposition groups expressed the stance of the Palestinian people.

"All these public conferences unanimously declared their refusal to the Oslo agreement and all the agreements to follow," Khalid added.

"The second point of understanding was the refusal of canceling the Palestinian Charter in addition to the concentration of the legitimate right of resistance."

The Lower House deputies who condemned the measures against the participating delegates emphasized the constitutional right of all citizens to travel, and to express their views and beliefs.

"We presented a memorandum to the Minister of Interior Nayef Al Qadi, to stop all the measures against these citizens," Mohammed Azyadeh, head of the Public Freedoms Committee (PFC) at the Lower House told *The Star*. "I believe that we can punish someone only after he commits a crime and not before," Azyadeh said

that the government is now convinced that its previous attitude was incorrect.

Meanwhile a public rally was organized in the Baqaa camp protesting the canceling of the Palestinian Charter, but before the authorized event took place a campaign of arrests was launched.

The PFC listened to all the complaints from the citizens concerning the imprisonment of eight Jordanians, one among them is a journalist. "We called on the Prime Minister to release them or send them to court," Azyadeh added.

Secretary general of the Popular Unity party who was also invited to participate at the Damascus venue returned home after his colleague Hussein Motaweh was refused to leave the country.

"Last Wednesday when we reached the borders, I was surprised to find out that Hussein Motaweh was forced back so I followed suit," Saeed Thyab said.

"It's a real tragedy to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights in this way," Thyab said that two members of his party were detained before the Baqaa rally.

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JORDAN

W E E K



An unconventional
report on Jordanian
news and views

Ramadan

■ The holy month of Ramadan is due to start this week. Muslims all over the world will be celebrating this month. Fasting, as everybody knows, is from dawn till dusk.

Immunity

■ The General Prosecutor submitted a letter to Lower House Speaker Abdel Hadi Al Majali asking for the lifting of parliamentary immunity on deputy Ahmed Oweidi Abbadi. According to *Petra*, the letter comes in line with a lawsuit brought against him earlier this year. Deputies were informed later that the letter was handed to Prime Minister Dr Fayez Tarawneh. Intensive discussions are expected to take place between the deputies about the case. It is thought that immunity can't be lifted while the house is still in session, however, this is still a debatable argument from a constitutional debate that is likely to continue over the next few weeks.

Pipeline

■ NO lawsuit cases will be taken against the owners of the Iraqi Petroleum Company sale. After two months of intensive investigations, Minister of Water Hani Mulqi submitted a comprehensive report to the Energy Committee of the Lower House showing that the pipeline was technically inadequate and therefore it is of no use for either oil or water. The report included details of mismanagement in dealing with the case.

Bail denied

■ The Amman Court of First Instance rejected last week bail for the release of the former director of the Jordan Tobacco and Cigarettes Company, Mr Ali Farid Al Saad. Defense attorneys submitted the request to judges Mohammed Ghaith Mismar and Mohammed Tarawneh. Both judges rejected the bail because of alleged embezzlement of JD 15 million from the company.

Coral reef

■ Friends of the Earth Middle East in Eilat arranged a workshop for owners and managers of dive centers from Aqaba and Eilat. The topic was "Impact of Divers and Snorkellers on Coral Reefs." The purpose of the gathering was to present the current status of reefs in Aqaba and Eilat, discuss how to improve environmental awareness, and promote cooperation between the dive centers and local authorities. There are four dive centers in Aqaba and two on the way, while in Eilat there are 10 operating dive centers. The number of registered dives in Aqaba per year is about 25,000, whereas in Eilat the numbers are around 250,000 dives per year. In addition, comparisons were made between the two countries on how law enforcement is carried out.

By Ibtisam Awadat
Star Staff Writer

PEOPLE CALL it 'Bint Al Balad' (the daughter of the country). Known for its nutritional value, the olive tree remains the most benevolent-giving tree right up till this very day.

Olive trees in Jordan are one of the country's main sources of income, forming over 70 percent of total agricultural revenues.

"It's well known that the olive tree is a seasonal one that bears olives in large quantities. One year, the harvest is plentiful while in the next, it decreases," Khalil Jureh, head of the Information Department at the Agricultural Extension Directorate pointed out. Jordanian farmers and customers are aware of this phenomenon, and it is a major reason why consumers buy extra quantities of olives and oil in the heavy harvest year, to make up for the next.

Olives in the Kingdom are

of a high quality. The 10-12 million trees are planted in five areas: Amman, Zerqa, Irbid, Balqa and Jerash. Moreover, 18 percent of the planted lands bear olives very early on, while the rest take more time to bloom.

The Ministry of Agriculture signed an agreement with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to finance a campaign titled "Increasing the Productivity of Olive Trees," as a step towards improving the quality of olives and oil in the Kingdom. The campaign, which was launched in September 1998, will last till June 1999. It aims at promoting awareness among farmers through directing them to up to date methods of farming, by the instruction of agricultural engineers.

"The field survey was very efficient. It took into consideration the problems which are facing olive farmers," Jureh added. The results of the studies and workshops of the campaign will be published soon



by the Ministry. "If we get good results we may apply it on other kinds of crops," Jureh added.

Sources at the Ministry told *The Star* that the estimated figures of the total production of olives for the current year is about 140,000 tons, while olive oil quantities are expected to reach 255,000 tons.

Meanwhile, the local consumption of oil and olives is about 21,000 tons, even though the season has not yet come to an end.

Statistics provided by agricultural engineer Ibrahim Abu Otaileh—head of the Planning and Development Administration in the Ministry of Agriculture—said that last year's harvest of olives was 82,002 tons, and 71,195 tons of oil. In relation to oil for this year the production will eventually cover local consumption.

"We ought to use more advanced methods and technologies, including special fertilizers, irrigation systems and water harvest to guarantee high levels of quality production," said farmer Salah Refa'i.

"However, many farmers consider the financial obstacles that are facing them as the main reason against improving this stream of farming," Refa'i

added. He pointed out that he prefers growing olive trees to other kinds of farming because he believes that it is a flourishing business.

"It's a heavy season this year, and till now, some farmers are still waiting in the queue to get their olives processed," commented one of the farmers who was anxiously watching the yellow-green olive oil squeezed from his olives.

"Prices of oil depend on the quality produced each year. However, the most preferable oil is that taken from Nebali olive trees," the farmer added.

The Ministry of Agriculture pointed out that Nebali olive trees contain 26-28 percent of oil. Meanwhile, "The imported oil is chemically treated and the squeezed oil is of the second class quality," Jureh told the *Star*.

It's a fact that the oil in Jordan, Palestine and Syria has a special flavor. "Locals instantly recognize Jordanian oil from its taste and color," Jureh added. He said that that in addition to the Gulf markets which prefer this kind of olive, Jordanian communities all over are keen on importing olives and oil from Jordan.

Nevertheless, "If you make a look around mills, you may

easily recognize wrongful doings by farmers, like sending olives in plastic packages, which badly affects the final product, since the oil starts to leak out. However, the right procedure is to use potter packages instead of plastic ones.



Some people also actually boil the olives before sending them to the mills to remove any bitter after-taste of the extracted oil. Others add a table spoon of salt to oil bottle to remove the bitterness of the new oil, which, sometimes it can be very sharp. Umm Mustapha says that "only black olives are used for oil extraction, while green olives are used for pickling for the rest of the year."

But there are also a lot of uses of the residues of the oil. The left for example, a black substance, is used to generate energy. Unfortunately, this type of substance is a wasted resource in Jordan. Few people use this material as fertilizers or as a source for heating.

"Olives are a basic staple diet which I buy every year; my family and I also use it for medicinal purposes," said Umm Ahmad, a housewife from Amman. "It never leaves our table," Umm Ahmad added. "To make sure of its quality, I buy the oil straight from the mill," she explained. Olives and the olive oil industry is blooming. This is thanks to the endless efforts and care by farmers to maintain one of the most famous agricultural crops in the Middle East. ■

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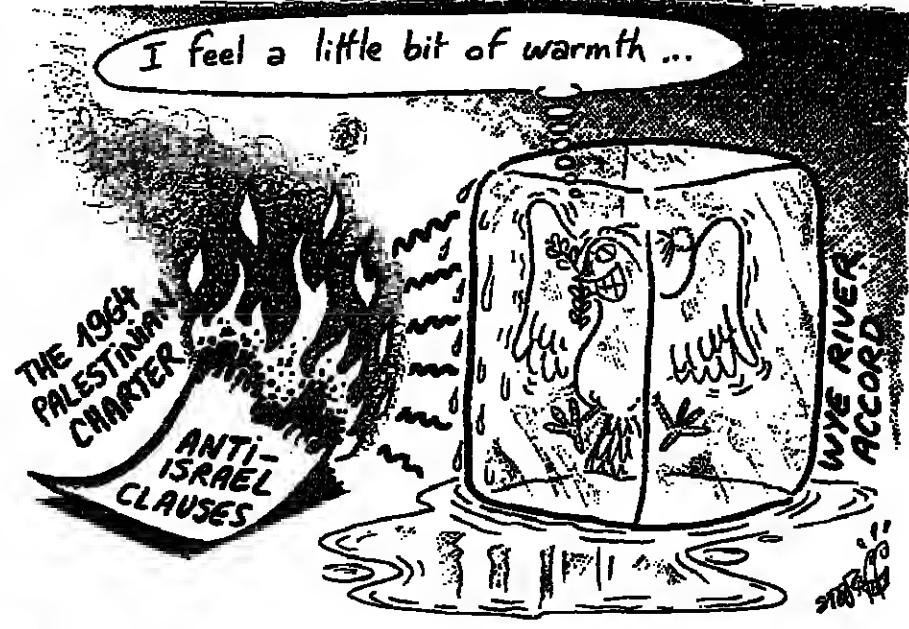


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Our Say...

Last man standing

OF THE three men who met at Erez Crossing point Tuesday morning in a bashful bid to salvage the Wye peace accord, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat appeared to be the least vulnerable—politically that is. Of course appearances may be deceiving. Arafat looked physically and mentally drained out, his voice betraying him at times especially while delivering his speech at the Palestine National Council (PNC) meetings in the presence of President Clinton. On the other hand, both Benjamin Netanyahu and President Clinton have never looked better—physically that is.

But in the quick world of politics, only Arafat could be standing by the end of the month. Clinton flies back to Washington to an almost certain impeachment verdict by the US House of Representatives, while Netanyahu frantically fights to prolong the life of his ailing government for few more weeks until he can decide what to do next.

But the historic events of the past week may soon go into oblivion if President Clinton, who only few days ago was the first US leader to visit Palestinian territories and address its highest political body, is forced to resign or is fired by the US Senate, which must decide his fate once an impeachment verdict has been passed. The Palestinians will see themselves as the biggest losers if Clinton suddenly and quickly disappears from the political scene. Only few days ago the leader of the most powerful country on earth was telling Palestinian representatives that they have legitimate rights and that they should soon determine their own future. Who knows if Clinton's successor would share his views and enthusiasm to redress the great injustice that plagues the Palestinians.

Netanyahu too could soon become a memory. Not that he is not popular in Israel anymore, but his coalition has never stood on shakier grounds than in the last few days. Small religious parties, especially those representing Jewish settlers and right-wing fanatics, threaten to quit the coalition if Netanyahu surrenders more land to the Palestinians. But under Wye Israel is supposed to make a second redeployment from the West Bank by this Friday. Netanyahu has made it clear that he will not commit to new dates and has spelled out new conditions for the Palestinians to meet before the Wye deal is allowed to continue.

Even after Arafat orchestrated the annulment of anti-Israel clauses from the National Charter before visiting President Clinton in Gaza, Netanyahu came back to demand more of the Palestinians. If his hung government collapses in the very near future, no one will miss him. He may still come back brandishing his "land-for-security" card to the Israeli voters. But in the hiatus that could occur in the event of a Clinton impeachment and a Netanyahu demise, the peace process will again find itself sinking in quick sand. Arafat, who appears to have harnessed his opponents for the time being, is likely to be waiting for a new set of leaders to take over in Washington and Tel Aviv before he starts all over again.



Rebel of Colombia's National Liberation Army (ELN) run from flames after setting fire to vehicles belonging to municipal authorities in the southwest city of Cali late 15 December. The ELN rebels set up a roadblock on the outskirts of the city, the second largest in Colombia, and carried out the attacks in what they see as the corrupt management of city officials.

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Letter from the Levant

Clinton's Gaza visit: The burden of history weighs in

By Osama El Sherif

THIS REGION was never in short supply of momentous contributions to human history. In fact, most of history's earlier annals are dedicated entirely to mostly extraordinary people and their activities, be they good or bad, in this part of the world.

One should mention the fact that in addition to bearing the burden of history, this region also carries a precarious freight of religious legacies for which it had endured unbelievable hardships. So where do we place President Bill Clinton's visit this week to Gaza and his address to the Palestine National Council? The visit and its consequences are already being termed as historic by today's historians, the likes of CNN, New York Times and BBC World.

Of course not all sorts of human activity are deemed unprecedented, momentous or unrivaled that they are dubbed as historic. History, through the people, agencies, organs that eventually write it, has its own way of classifying feats such as presidential visits and declarations. Clinton's visit to Palestinian territories is the first of its kind, implying recognition of Palestinian nationalism and identity. Clinton's statements are also historic because they come from the leader of the most powerful country on earth, the very same country that has stood firmly against Palestinian statehood, self-determination and fulfillment of national aspirations for almost half century.

The Palestinian vote, by raising hands, clapping and standing up to imply approval, to drop anti-Israel clauses in the 34-year-old Palestinian Charter, in the presence of President Clinton is also an historic event. Historians will be busy documenting these developments, classifying and sorting them out so that they can make sense to future generations. Of course much of what happened does not make sense to us today.

For instance, where does the significance of Clinton's visit lie exactly? Is it the fact that he had set foot in Gaza International Airport, spoken to Palestinian dignitaries at Rashad Al Shawa Hall in downtown Gaza City, uttered the magic words of self-determination and legitimate rights? Is the historical value of these events real or fictitious. And then can we all be objective about how we see or understand certain events within the context of history. Arabs and Israelis have a different historical appreciation of the Balfour Declaration, for example, or of 14 May 1947, the day Israel was born. That date has a different historical taste, if you will, for both people.

President Yasser Arafat also made history in the past few days. He had his day in the sun, receiving his American guest as a leader of the Palestinian people, parading honor guards, hosting official banquets and holding joint press conferences among



Osama El Sherif

other activities that only heads of state engage in. But apart from the official receptions and farewells and the overdose of symbolism that the Palestinians have had to last them a lifetime, where in history will this whole charade be recorded? Will it be entered as a chapter heading, a sub-head or a footnote?

This is not to belittle the importance of Clinton's visit to Gaza and its significance within the framework of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Indeed, the visit indicated a change in US strategy with regard to the Palestinian cause. It now seems willing to accept that in eventualities the Palestinians should be allowed to set up their own mini-state on bits and pieces of land, that Israel reluctantly regurgitates every now and then, within a final status solution. That solution, of course, aims at sealing the fate of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict for a long time to come.

From a historical perspective, a century that began with Europe experimenting to find some sort of a final solution to the Jewish Question, from relocation to extermination, from carving up a homeland to the Holocaust, is about to end with the United States hoping to broker a final solution to the Palestinian Question. Israel, is now a reality and its destruction, the amendments to the Palestinian Charter notwithstanding, is no longer imaginable or feasible. What is left is the Palestinian issue, which had remained inconclusive for decades, getting more complicated as time goes by.

History was "made" several years ago when the Arabs endorsed the peaceful solution, as opposed to a military one, so long as it's goal was to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. That naturally entailed implementing UN resolutions and granting the Palestinians the right for self-

determination, which is an unalienable right according to the community of nations. But in a truly historic twist, none of the above was achieved.

The peace that we have now is a freak. It is neither just, nor comprehensive and it is definitely not lasting. For history tells us that nothing lasts forever. Which brings us to the final status negotiations, which is the buzz phrase now that Wye has replaced Oslo, for now, as a benchmark of Palestinian national rights and Israel's security requirements. Both seem to have developed a sort of uneven relationship where the first diminishes as the second inflates. More importantly, we have arrived at a situation where the more the Palestinians give the less they get back in return. The final status negotiations promise to be as "just", "balanced" and "unambiguous" as the whole Middle East peace process has been starting from Madrid, through Oslo and Washington, into Taba and Hebron and culminating with Wye River. So much for Jerusalem, the refugees, water, borders, security etc.

So looking beyond the Gaza visit and the famous show of hands and the forceful words of a fine American statesman, where does history stand?

Within a proper historical context the visit may prove to be much more important than most of us had thought. It's place in history, at least for the region, may prove to be prominent indeed. The question we should ponder is not if history will recognize these feats as eligible for mention or not, but how will it judge them. Will history mention the thousands of dunums of virgin West Bank land that Israel grabbed soon after it gave away control of Palestinian towns and villages? Will history point to the endless plight of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees? Or will it detail the hundreds of Israeli violations, of agreements, and accords that it had signed with the Palestinians? That could make a boring reading compared to the flamboyance that comes with presidential visits, statements and gestures.

So far history has not been kind or generous to us. For almost a century we have been paying the heavy price of historic crimes that resulted in a homeland being wiped out and a nation being fragmented. To think we are closer today to seeing a Palestinian homeland born out of the peace process is a historical mistake. To believe that Israel will eventually hand out portions of Jerusalem, allow refugees to return and tolerate a Palestinian state along its borders is equally wrong.

History is not only about looking back but looking ahead as well. We are not merely observers of history as it folds everyday but are active authors of its annals and records. And just as history is a point of reference for great events, good or bad, it is also a judge, a harsh one indeed. Again we are haunted by the burden we carry as our precarious freight weighs in.

Capital in cyberspace

By Marwan Asmar

WE ARE already living the events of the 21st century. For the pessimist, the next millennium is likely to be characterized by polarity, overpopulation, poverty, fight for clean water, more urbanization, and change in our life-styles, attitudes and behavior. These factors promise to lead to a fight over resources, but the struggle is likely to be through different tools and instruments. The notion of cyberspace where the computer is the next best thing

to a human brain is taking over our complicated lives, and directing relations between individuals, nations, corporations and utilities.

Rich and poor countries are likely to continue. The disappearance of the communist world has given the capitalist world a free-ride. The road seems set. Intellectuals, and technocrats are today moving in a uni-directional way: To the rich and super-rich countries, to the states that form the cyberworld.

Now you are talking about a

capitalist intellectual power that defines and proliferates the might of a super-rich economy whose ideology is based on making even more money.

Today it is not the crude determinism that existed in earlier centuries. The rapid changes of technology characterized by the introduction of the computer, the Internet and the IT technology is likely to be used for more economic control, and accumulation.

Artificial intelligence is becoming the maneuvering instrument in the hands of a

minority to manipulate the economic matters of the world. And in this respect, it is never too important to stress that international openness has canceled the concept of a national territory as one that controls the direction of its economy.

Through the possession of thought processes, production has become internationalized. It is produced in one part of the globe, but then transferred and exported to other marketplaces. However, there have been periods of developments, hegemony, and strength, which are based on geography and space.

In the 19th century, for instance, it was Britain that controlled the world economy; such control was transferred to the Americans in the present century.

Today, and as we prepare to go into the 21 century, it is international corporations who are administering world economics through its power, and surplus capital. This period is different because of the element of artificial intelligence. Money these days is directed through computers, at the touch of a keyboard you can move millions of dollars around the world.

In a global perspective, the immediate changes are likely to be more of the same thing. There are likely to be aggressive developments in demography, forcing people to leave the poorer regions to richer ones. Because of the phenomenal growth of the world's population and the widening sector of the old-aged, the poor will get poorer and the rich will get richer. It will lead to a more concentration of wealth into the hands of a decreasing minority in the North.

And for such perception, we can discern that the 21 century will be one of silent strife, the object of which will be to accumulate more money. Due to the increased population of the world the conflict will develop between two parties: one will further move into the cyberworld, buying, controlling, and developing more computers and intricate software to establish more sophisticated methods of control over international space. On the other hand, the other lot—the South—will continue to struggle for subsistence.

Middle East Beat

by Khairi Janbek

Chaos and Us

IF THE flunkings of a butterfly in one part of the world can cause hurricanes in another, then the "chaos theory" can have unpredictable havoc. Luckily, even chaos has its own logic and eventually falls into organized sets of categories. The personal problems of the US president and his uncertain political future are casting a heavy shadow on our region. Wye needs a push to be implemented, and for that to happen, Clinton must be able to avoid the effects of the Congressional wrangling over his status.

The spiral of violence in the Occupied Territories, coupled with the Israeli government's hard-line stance and the stalemate in the peace process, cannot be resolved short of miraculous efforts by president Clinton who is heading an administration which is rapidly losing prestige at home.

It is essential to realize that the individual in our part of the world is missing the most essential component of their being: Uncertainty. Much has been said about development, progress, and economic property taking for granted the immediate circumstances of human conditions. But without engendering the feeling of personal security of the individual, all arguments tend to fall into sophistry and chicken-egg dilemmas.

It has always been the Jordanian position as stated by HM King Hussein, and expounded by HRH Prince Hassan, the Regent, that human values are above all other considerations, therefore the individual's sense of dignity, safety, and security are the launching pad for confidence-building, and cooperation among the peoples of the Middle East.

To be used to death and destruction, and even finding such methods as desirable to solve problems is an aberration rather than a humanitarian norm. It has become an international code of hate practice, for probable reasons of convenience. Once the high profile meetings and political statements are over, the results of president Clinton's visit must be translated into real transformations in the "Wye Accord" in terms of taking practical confidence-building steps between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Away from statistics and numbers, the fact remains that life and death in Iraq are interchangeable terms now. Power politics, internally, as well as internationally, oil prices, and weapon of mass destruction are becoming implements of collective punishment of the Iraqi people, a method which has been rejected many years ago by the whole body of the international community. Uncertainties are abound in this field, and they are clearly reflected in the various stand-offs between the Iraqi political authorities and the UN.

The main player, the USA, while rejecting the notion that the leadership of the Ba'ath Party in Iraq is the embodiment of the political will of the Iraqi people, seems to act as if the situation is really that. American declarations are to the effect that the Iraqi people are not the target of the sanctions, while on the other, inexplicably according to this logic, they are.

There is no denying that the situation is complicated and difficult to deal with, and there is no need to complicate matters even further. So where is the decision on how to deal with Iraq? Clearly, there is a need to take a decision, just for the sake of the Iraqi people whom have been reduced to levels of pre-modernity standards. But again, the question of leadership in taking firm and positive decision is most important. The peace process in the Middle East, and the Iraqi situation, may yet prove to be the life-line to the presidency of Mr Clinton.

Business
scene

Foreign investment at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) increased this year to JD 116 million. According to the director general of the Securities Authority, Basam Al Saket, non-Jordanians have purchased shares worth over JD 190 million this year. They also sold shares to the tune of JD 75 million. Foreign investment increased by more than 60 percent than last year.

The joint Jordanian-Iranian Committee held its third session of talks in Amman this week. The meetings, attended by the Minister of Trade and Industry, Mohammed Hourani and his Iranian counterpart, Ghulam Rida Shafiei, featured the signing of two agreements on transportation and banking cooperation.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry confirmed that its food reserve is stable and adequate for the upcoming Holy month of Ramadan. Different kinds of food are made available in the local market, including meat, vegetables and fruits, and other food supplies. The ministry assured the public in its statement last week that both the private and public sectors coordinate their efforts to provide foods for the Jordanian people during this Holy month.

The Arab Monetary Fund offered a loan of \$16.8 million to Jordan to assist in developing its economy. The loan aims at introducing a new electronic system of payments.

Four new members were recently appointed on the board of the Jordanian Cement Factories (JCF). The new members represent the French company, La Farage, who purchased 33 percent of the JCF shares, formerly held by the public sector.

The second Jordanian Industries Fair will be held in Baghdad this week. The exhibition, due to open today (17 December), is featuring the latest developed industries in the Kingdom, presented by 50 companies and industrial corporations. The exhibition continues until 25 December.

Board of the Securities Authority agreed on the registration of new 500,000 shares for the Vegetable Oils Company and 940,968 shares for the Union Developed Industries company.

Over \$109 million were Jordan's exports to the European Union during last year. Haider Murad, chairman of Amman Trade Chamber, said during a special workshop held last week, that Jordan's imports during the same period amounted to \$1,326 billion. The workshop featured real potentials for better exports.

Tourism promotion way
for future argues experts

By Ghassan Joha
Star Staff Writer

TOURISM IS a business that thrives on communication. It is set to be the world's fastest growing industry in the 21st century. In this respect, the World Tourism Organization (WTO), a leading global travel and tourism sector, is taking the bull by the horn and going full throttle to produce a tourism fit for the next millennium.

And Jordan is getting ready for the occasion. The Ministry of Tourism in cooperation with the WTO, has just held a two-day media tourism conference to start the ball rolling. The seminar, "Tourism and the Media: Shaping the Image of Destinations in the Middle East and North Africa," was held at the Le Meridien Hotel. One of its aspects was its stress on the importance of media in promoting tourism in the Kingdom.

Tourism Minister Aqel Belajji stressed the vitality of tourism promotion, not just in Jordan but all over the world. The Minister urged governments in the region to work hard to develop tourism through increasing cooperation between public and private sectors.

Minister of Information Nasser Joudeh confirmed later that with tourism business flourish-

ing all over the world, and the media can do a great deal in this regard.

Joudeh said that the media can play two opposite roles of changing the public's views and attitudes towards tourism. It can promote tourism or ruin it.

He emphasized the importance of media research as a step in promote tourism as an independent market.

However, in the field of marketing media, a defined and clear strategy must be applied at first with full awareness of the goals.

Andrew Harvey, editor of the Beirut Star, told the audience that the image of tourism in the Middle East shouldn't be negatively portrayed, especially by the media. There should be greater efforts by the private and public sectors to set out their business by coordinating efforts between both sides.

Amr Abdel Ghaffar, regional representative for the Middle East, shed light on the region's figures in the global panorama.

He stated that in 1998, 612 million tourists arrived in the Middle East, spending over \$440 billion in Arab countries.

He emphasized that the WTO is expecting a booming future for tourism—it is estimated that 673 million tourists will be setting their feet in the



Arab region in 1999.

Mr Abdel Ghaffar added that revenues from worldwide tourism will reach over \$620 billion dollars next year. This time, the Far East and South Asia will be the center of attraction.

And because of this, Deborah Lubman, chief of communication at the WTO, stressed the importance of strong promotional strategies.

She told The Star that Jordan has a rich treasure of natural sites around the kingdom, which must be promoted on a large scale.

"There is a lot to do to preserve Jordan's position on the agenda of world tourism," she concluded.

ism sector around the world. Media is a business which highly depends on the public's attitudes and tendencies," he added.

He stated that transparency, thorough communication tools, original material and consistency are the main factors for promoting tourism through the media.

Furthermore, Mr Cameron told The Star, that the Middle East countries must work on promoting tourism through coordinating policies.

"The Kingdom should separate its tourism from that of the West Bank. The archaeological sites here are marvelous and of a great magnitude. Therefore, the media is obliged to promote local tourism in a proper and efficient manner," he continued to say. On the other hand, Professor Sari Nasser from the University of Jordan, spoke about the social and cultural impacts of tourism in the Middle East.

He said that benefits could be maximized by enhancing the way we reach people abroad. During the seminar, participating journalists were taken in a special visit to the recently uncovered and excavated Baptism site, which is considered to be Jordan's paramount landmark for the new Millennium.

Mr Cameron highlighted the real potential behind creating public awareness about tourism. "Various techniques could be utilized today to improve public opinion about the tour-

The '99 budget

Views from the private sector

By Ghassan Joha
Star Staff Writer

SINCE ITS implementation in the early 1990s, the economic reform program in Jordan went through promising changes. However, stricter commitments and determination towards mobilizing the local economy is still required.

The government's new budget of 1999, could just enhance a new phase of economic growth and development in the Kingdom.

The budget, which was submitted last week to the Lower House, will estimate public expenses next year by JD 2,160 million, and revenues by JD 1,720 million.

Furthermore, the budget will set out JD 950 million for salaries, fees, pensions, and public compensations.

Meanwhile, the government still has with debts of about JD 307 million.

However, the budget forecasts that the economy will grow, despite a deficit of JD 435 million.

Sources at the Ministry of Finance are optimistic about the future arguing that the deficit is showing signs of slowly going down.

They say that it could go as low as JD 47 million. But this would depend on the degree of state revenues from public investments. But even so this figure could be greatly overstretched.

But the Ministry has other tools under its sleeves. It wants to use foreign aid—estimated at JD 200 million—to further lower the King-

dom's deficit. But even using that, the deficit would only decrease to JD 188 million, which is about 35 percent of the Gross Domestic Products.

Nevertheless, economists are analyzing the new budget from a different point of view. They say that the government is highly optimistic, arguing that the budget will only have a marginal impact on the national economy, leading to increased taxes, recession and reduction in public consumption.

Three prominent bankers highlighted the issue. They pointed out that the banking sector is vital to the growth of the economy at a time when Jordan prepares to go into the next millennium of globalization and competitive economic markets.

Wassif Azar, general director of the Jordan Ahli Bank, argues that the country has the capability to mobilize local investment. But this wouldn't be realized unless there is a greater coordination between the public and private sectors, and an expansion of local investments.

Mr Azar asked for more stable measures which must be applied in the banking sector to secure more funds for investment projects. He added that such projects should be of a long-term nature to increase the country's revenues.

However, banking must go side by side with public interests in order to promote the national economy. According to Fakhri Balbisi, a well-known Jordanian economist, such adjustment could be

achieved when the government expands its financial facilities, and develop economic policies, through setting out up-to-date studies and research to measure the advantages and disadvantages of new policies.

The Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ), however, sticks to its policy of acquiring a stable monetary reserve of foreign currencies.

According to the latest records, the reserve increased to \$1250 million. Additionally, the monetary in the Kingdom has increased firmly during the year.

Moreover, increasing the interest rates is the main objective of the CBJ, as long as it withholds the value of the Jordanian currency.

Statistics show that the national economy was badly effected by its slow development during the past three years. Experts suggest that reasons behind this are political. The sanctions on Iraq, in addition to the frozen peace process affected the local markets in Jordan.

The situation obliged public institutions to increase revenues, and refrain from applying more unsentled loans.

Abdallah Dweik, general manager of the Housing Bank, emphasized the necessity to merge financial institutions altogether. He added that Jordanian banks expanded their business since the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace process in 1994.

Mr Dweik continued to say that people would have the

opportunity to cooperate within on-growing companies, by using high developed services to increase financial investments.

Under the umbrella of political dilemmas, the government should promote the idea of international cooperation with large markets like the European Union.

Mr Azar mentioned that the pro-Arab markets and economic considerations must be put ahead on the

government's agenda.

All in all, the new budget is considered to be more comprehensive than the previous year. Experts mentioned in particular all the expenses that the Kingdom must pay off during the upcoming year. They also wished that there will be more transparency and credibility in dealing with the economic status of the Kingdom.

Business Chronicle

Prices in Ramadan

RAMADAN IS upon us again. It is a month of religious worship. Whilst people are already expressing fears about the same old story of high prices, they are hoping that merchants this year will stick to the reverence of the month, and keep down the price spiral that always occurs when there is too much demand. In a normal supply demand situation prices would usually go up if there is scarcity in demand. What usually happens in Ramadan however, is that prices go up anyway despite the fact that supply is abundant.

Each year, the prices of food soar high during the first days of Ramadan, and their quality takes a downhill drive. Here, government can play a very effective role. They must control prices or at the very least keep a tight check on it.

After abolishing the Ministry of Supply, the Ministry of Trade and Industry have become responsible for controlling prices. But during Ramadan, the situation as far as the prices are concerned become more elastic than usual. This is partly triggered by consumers, as they influence market behavior, and markets in turn.

But despite this, it will be up to the Ministry to keep both prices at a reasonable level, and stocks in markets around the country plentiful. In this respect, the government's decision to cut bread prices by four percent at the outset of Ramadan has been greatly welcomed. This attempt to stabilize prices indicates that the government is becoming aware of the public's needs, and the ongoing economic dilemmas of the recession in the Kingdom.

Boosting business between
Jordan and Spain

MR ABED AL QADER KHEIR, a Spanish national is presently in Amman to meet Jordanian businessmen. The purpose of his visit is to establish links between the local business community and Spanish businessmen. Mr Kheir, who is originally a Jordanian citizen, represents the business people in the province of Castilla and Leon in Spain. Mr Kheir seeks also to widen the area of coop-

eration between Jordan and Spain especially in the fields of commerce, industry, and tourism. At present Mr Kheir is part of a team that is organizing a Spanish business exhibition that is due to be held in Amman in March. Many businessmen from Castilla and Leon are expected to participate in the 10-day event (21 March-3 April).

Royal Jordanian celebrates its 35th anniversary

By Star Staff Writer

"THE DEBTS of Royal Jordanian decreased from \$708 million in 1993 to \$706 million in 1998" said Mr Nader Al Thahabi, Chief Executive Officer at Royal Jordanian (RJ) in a press conference held at the Housing Bank complex in Amman on Tuesday 15 December. His speech was made on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of RJ.

Mr Al Thahabi said that Royal Jordanian is trying to decrease its liabilities by selling (Tristar) and replacing it with (Air Bus) which will eventually save the airline \$33 million annually.

He added that the existing debts are basically the results of charter flights and foreign banks loans, explaining that Royal Jordanian has paid back more than half of these debts.

However, RJ is still indebted to the Arab Bank, Housing Bank, the Social Security Corp., and others local companies. Mr Al Thahabi said that the airline's biggest debts belong to the Oil Refinery company reaching JD 160 million. But he added that the airline has paid back about JD 11 million of this.

He affirmed the dedication of



Mr Nader Al Thahabi, Chief Executive Officer of Royal Jordanian speaks to reporters at press conference

Royal Jordanian to the privatization process and the restructuring of the airlines and added that Royal Jordanian is working to improve service quality. Al Thahabi told reporters that Royal Jordanian is still looking for a strategic partner with specific characteristics.

Mr Al Thahabi expects the number of passengers to reach around 1.2 million compared with 1,350 million last year. He added that this decrease is due

to the regional instability and tension between Iraq and the US.


Al Thahabi also pointed out that the Indonesian and Malaysian financial crises badly affected Royal Jordanian since the number of pilgrimages from these countries decreased substantially.

Al Thahabi said that the percentage of plane-takeoff reached 79.7 in 1998, which is a high percentage compared with

others airports.

Mr Al Thahabi concluded the press conference with thanks and gratitude to His Majesty King Hussein for his continuous support for the national airline. Al Thahabi also thanked former and current employees of the company for their hard work and dedication.

Royal Jordanian won the 'Platinum Star' award for services and the ISO 9002 award.



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Palestinian President Yasser Arafat holds President Clinton's hand against his heart after Arafat's speech to the Palestinian National Council December 14. Arafat called for a vote that passed and abolished all references to the destruction of Israel from the Palestinian Charter.

Clinton visit brings them hope, Palestinians say

By Rebecca Tronson

GAZA CITY—Far from the convention halls, the show-of-hand votes and the airport ribbon cuttings, the people of the impoverished Gaza Strip looked to President Clinton on Monday for dignity and hope.

And many said they found what they sought, discovering in the eloquent words of the US president and in his presence here in Gaza a deeply compassionate recognition of their dreams for statehood and of their yawning needs.

"He has made us believe in the future again," said Amal Dabbagh, a Gaza City housewife and mother of five. "He has given us hope."

At times, this narrow stretch of desert seemed almost unrecognizable Monday, awash in a sea of red, white and blue and dotted by signs, in English and Arabic, that were filled with the lan-

guage of pride and aspiration. "Palestine is the Land of Peace," one said. "We Have a Dream, Same as Yours," read another, in an apparent nod to the words of Martin Luther King Jr.

On the dusty streets of Gaza, there were surreal scenes: Palestinian children rode bicycles decorated with US flags, and normally uncommunicative Palestinian police shouted words of welcome to anyone who appeared vaguely Western. American flags four stories tall and giant posters of Clinton with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat hung above streets that have often been the scene of violent demonstrations, where a US flag was more likely to be set ablaze in protest over US policy. There was eager anticipation of a budding relationship with the United States that would have been unimaginable less than a decade ago, when US diplomats were forbidden to speak to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Clinton's role in pushing the negotiations forward at the October marathon that resulted in the Wye Plantation agreement has, for many Palestinians, earned him gratitude and the permanent mantle of a peacemaker.

"Today he (Clinton) will not support a Palestinian state, but maybe tomorrow," said Khalil el Biram, a 54-year-old shopkeeper selling dry goods not far from where the American president spoke to the assembled members of the Palestine National Council.

"The US used to help Israel, but now we hope they'll help us. The Americans are sharing our troubles."

"Today it's a new era, a new situation" with the United States, said a Palestinian police commander, Sayed Shaban, 41, whose men helped guard Clinton. "I'm not saying that everything is on the right path. I'm saying that the majority of the people are very happy with the visit."

Perhaps expectations were raised too high, creating the risk of disappointment and anger at the United States if, or when, the peace process with Israel bogs down again.

But in the territory's squalid refugee camps and along this city's narrow, crowded streets, not all were convinced that anything, fundamentally, had changed during the president's daylong visit. Some said they wondered if peace will bring them jobs, repair their broken sidewalks and feed their children. In the Jabalya refugee camp, where residents said more than half the population is out of work, many said they supported the peace process but doubted that even the US president could keep it on track for long. "We hope it will be good, but the Israelis don't want it to go forward," said Samir Oweis, 35.

Even so, he and others made it clear that they were counting on the United States to press forward with the process. "We know the solution is in the hands of the United

States," said Shehadeh Amoudi, 45, who owns a household goods shop in the camp. "It gives the people better hope. It makes them feel they can be more supportive of peace."

The crowd gathered just outside an unfinished building, sitting on plastic chairs and drinking cups of sweet tea. Several expressed a measure of anger that, despite the peace process, hundreds of Palestinians remain imprisoned by Israel. And they said Clinton should do more to pressure Israel to free the prisoners, whom they view as heroes of a national struggle. Israel has said it will not free Palestinians who participated in violent acts against Israelis or who are members of militant Islamic groups.

Abdul Fattah Sharafi, a 20-year-old in a janny blue hat, proudly declared that he had burned American flags during the long uprising known as the "Intifada." He remained determined to see Israel fall into the sea, he said. Several youngsters in the crowd agreed. But on this day of newly heightened aspirations for peace with Israel, it quickly was apparent that they were in the minority. "No one wants to destroy Israel," said Amoudi. "I worked in Israel for 20 years." "If they will live in peace with us, we will live in peace with them," another said. "We all want peace."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Clinton goes to Palestinian territory to prod peace along

Nicholas Goldberg

GAZA CITY—In a move that would have been inconceivable a few years ago, President Clinton traveled Monday to Gaza City, the seaside town that has been a symbol of Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation and, more recently, their aspirations for a sovereign, independent state.

Palestinian police officers lined up against the gruffly lined walls, and thousands of American and Palestinian were unfurled when the American helicopters appeared in the sky. Donkey carts, barefoot children, and Israeli soldiers lined up over their sandbags. The president touched down at the brand-new Gaza International Airport.

In speeches and meetings with Palestinian leaders who only a decade ago would have been considered terrorists, Clinton took the extraordinary step of sympathizing with their frustrations and acknowledging their right to determine their own fate in their own land. "I know the peace process stands at a crossroads," Clinton said. "Behind you, a history of oppression and dispersal; before you, the opportunity to shape your own future on your own land. I am profoundly honored to be the first American president to address the Palestinian people in a city governed by Palestinians."

Clinton was in town to

attend the Palestine National Council session that was to annul, formally and publicly, clauses of the three-decade-old charter that called for the destruction of Israel. After several weeks of controversy about whether the vote would satisfy the demands of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, hundreds of Palestinian leaders Monday raised their hands to indicate that the offensive articles—they have already forsworn them but agreed to do so again—were no longer in force.

Moments later, the Israeli sent word that they were satisfied that the issue had been resolved. "I hope this will close this chapter forever," said Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat after the vote.

Even as one difficult problem was solved, however, others moved to the forefront. Aides to Netanyahu said he still was not prepared to go ahead with the next series of troop withdrawals from the West Bank, scheduled for later this week, which was agreed to in talks in Maryland in October. The aides said there were still more conditions they expected Arafat to meet, including a pledge not to declare an independent state unilaterally next year.

With the Wye accord on the line, Clinton, Arafat and Netanyahu planned met Tuesday morning on the Israel-Gaza border. Then after visits to Masada and Bethlehem, the president headed home later



President Clinton with his daughter Chelsea hang ornaments on a Christmas tree during a ceremony in Manger Square in Bethlehem, December 15. Clinton was on the last day of his three day visit to the Middle East.

Tuesday. In the end, Arafat's agreement to have the PNC vote once again to annul the charter's call for the destruction of Israel was a small price to pay for the historic visit of the president to this 28-mile-long patch of land.

On the streets, there were

some Palestinians who said they still distrusted the United States, which has long been viewed as Israel's most steadfast ally in the regional conflict. However, most Palestinians Monday said they were proud that Clinton had come, and most felt sure that it

augured a dramatic shift in relations with the most powerful country in the world.

"The United States is the superpower that can help everybody, and whatever country it helps will be raised up," said Khalil Mahmoud el-Biram, a shopkeeper in Gaza City.

First Lady receives a warm welcome from Palestinians

By Rebecca Tronson

GAZA CITY—Of many standing ovations at the Shawa convention center Monday, one of the warmest went to the other Clinton in the house, the American president's wife, Hillary.

Welcomed by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat as a "great and generous guest," Hillary Rodham Clinton beamed to the audience, her daughter Chelsea at her side. Mrs. Clinton and Arafat's wife, Soha, seemed genuinely friendly, walking arm-in-arm and whispering to each other as though sharing comfortable confidences.

While her husband is in Israel and the Palestinian territories to attempt to rescue an endangered peace, Hillary Clinton is making a few stops of her own. She visited a school for handicapped children on Monday. The day before, she went to a village where Arab and Jewish families live side by side.

Praised as a strong woman who stands by her family in the worst of times, she has attracted fans on both sides of the national divide. But especially among Palestinians, the first lady has earned special status because she is remembered for having declared, way ahead of American officialdom, her support for a Palestinian state.

"I think that it will be in the long-term interests of the Middle East for Palestine to be a state, and for it to be a state that is responsible for its citizens' well-being, a state that has responsibility for providing education and health care and economic opportunity to its citizens, a state that has to accept the responsibility for governing," she said.

That statement last May set off alarm bells among Israelis, American Jewish organizations, and an ansy US State Department that was then attempting to restart Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. The president's spokesman found himself having to distance Hillary Clinton's comments from her husband's official position.

On this trip, the Israelis have not mentioned their dismay over the matter, although Israeli television Monday night



Suha Arafat (L), the wife of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, and US First Lady Hillary Clinton try on traditional embroidered Palestinian dress at a women's center at Beach Camp which supports small business development for Palestinian women December 14. President Clinton's visit to this Palestinian controlled area was lauded by Palestinian leaders as a boost to their quest for statehood.

rebroadcast the comments, which she made to a group of Israeli and Arab students.

And on Monday as she visited Gaza children who serenaded her with drums and bagpipes, a reporter shouted out a question, asking whether she still supported a Palestinian state.

She ignored the reporter. Instead, she pledged \$73 million in aid to Palestinian refugees and women's groups. Palestinians who jostled to catch a glimpse Monday of Clinton or her husband said they were grateful to the first lady for her statehood statements. "There was an impression that the US was only a friend of Israel, but

when she said these things and then came here, there was a change in that impression," said Mahmoud Sawafra, who was working in his father's small grocery store.

Amal Dabbagh and her daughters were hanging off their third-floor balcony to watch the festivities as the Clinton motorcade whizzed by. Dabbagh, 43, had stayed up all night cooking, and done all her cleaning in the morning, so that she would be free for when the Clintons came to town.

"It is a very good thing for our people that she could come with her husband and visit the Palestinian people, and that we could see them with our own eyes," she said. In Israel, Hillary Clinton had admirers too. "Hillary is a role model for me," said Jocelyn Cross, a 23-year-old from Philadelphia who is "making aliya," immigrating to Israel. "She's an intelligent woman who can stand up for herself. And she dresses great."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Arab Americans torn over Clinton tragedy

By Ray Hanania

NO OTHER president or American politician on a national level has done more to support the aspirations of the Palestinian people than President William Jefferson Clinton.

Anyone who even allows his wife to join him in making a public statement supporting Palestinian Statehood that challenges the official policies of AIPAC deserves extra credit for courage.

Yet despite all this, many Arab Americans who believe strongly in issues of morality are torn between Clinton's record of fairness on Palestinian and Arab issues, and his unethical, immoral behavior in the White House.

Clinton's conduct deserves censure and it may even deserve impeachment. It is a tragedy when we consider his track record of balancing American foreign policy between Israel and the Arabs better than it ever has been before.

Clinton's efforts far exceed even the policies of President Jimmy Carter, who, despite selling the late Anwar Sadat a bill of goods, managed to declare his support of Palestinian Statehood immediately after he was defeated for re-election.

It wasn't long ago that American Officials—seven African Americans—were severely punished for simply "talking" to representatives of the Palestinian people.

Andrew Young, the courageous African American civil rights leader and right hand of the assassinated Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., was forced to resign as the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, simply for having a conversation with Zuhdi Labih Terazi, the kindly old former official observer of the PLO.

Paul Findley was ostracized, berated and then forced out of his southern Illinois Congressional district seat in a campaign of hate that was funded

by pro-Israel extremists. Even though, his policies meticulously adhered to the needs and the wishes of his congressional district's constituents.

Need we remember the stunning defeat of one of Illinois' most popular US Senators, Charles Percy, who also was defeated in a campaign partly funded by pro-Israel fanatics who opposed his "even handed" approach to the Middle East.

We can go all the way back to President Harry S. Truman, the so-called "people's president" who was forced by his high-level Jewish advisers to recognize Israel's boundaries despite the fact that those boundaries violated even the United Nations Partition Plan and contradicted American interests in the Arab World.

There was a time when being fair wasn't enough in the United States. You had to be pro-Israel or you had to be defeated. That was and still is AIPAC policy, although they are not as effective today as they were during their "Thousand Year Reign."

Public debate between candidates for election was never about which side the candidate supported in the Middle East, but about which candidate supported Israel more.

President Clinton didn't have to support Palestinian rights. He could have done what most elected officials—including those of Arab heritage—often do, and that is to support AIPAC and Israel's one-sided agenda, offering lip service to Palestinian rights only once out of office. John Sununu and Senator George Mitchell are great examples of Arab Americans in high places who could only whisper about their Arab heritage until they were filing their papers for their pensions.

President Carter is credited with bringing about the first ever peace accord between Israel and an Arab government when he convinced the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat that the American

Indians didn't get such a bad deal when they sold Manhattan Island for a handful of beads and empty promises.

President George Bush, who orchestrated the Arab Front in the war against Iraq, was actually the first president ever to address an Arab American audience, although it was very low key.

Clinton became the first American President ever to publicly address an Arab American audience. And while the flock was coming in hot and heavy against him from extremist supporters of Israel, he even dispatched his wife, Hillary, to publicly declare her support of a Palestinian State.

His actions are a testament to amazing courage considering that every prior elected official who ever expressed a hint of sympathy for Palestinian or Arab concerns was hammered first by AIPAC, then ostracized by the US Congress (which is the first territory Israel has occupied), and finally, ousted in campaigns of hatred funded usually by people who don't even live in the targeted elected officials' home district.

Arab Americans must not be silent during this debate on Clinton's alleged transgressions, however. We should be vocal. But once the debate is over and his punishment is decided, let us not forget that President Clinton has forever changed the American-Middle East game board, and has opened a door that has shamefully been closed to Americans of Arab heritage, and that can never be closed again.

More importantly, Clinton has stood publicly for what is right, rather than for what is politically correct.

Arab Media Syndication (Ray Hanania is a Palestinian American author and journalist.)

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17 DECEMBER 1998

E N T E R T A I N M E N T

THE STAR 7

Voice actors' abilities are more in demand than ever

By Michael P. Lucas

HOLLYWOOD—Dylan Pickle, the glibly new baby on Nickelodeon's long-running animated series "Rugrats," is actress Tara Charendoff's brother-punching, toy-grabbing, upspitting bundle of joy.

She supplied Dylan's cries in "The Rugrats Movie" and she'll be with him in February when he crawls, cooing and gurgling, into the small screen to join the gang of preschoolers in new episodes of the No. 1-rated prime-time children's series.

Charendoff is considered a rising star among the newest wave of voice-over actors, a fraternity long regarded as Hollywood's carnival sideshow—the ones who laid the goofy, goofy soundtracks on slapstick cartoons. But with animated shows sprouting like kudzu, and reflecting costlier production values and better writing, voice-over work has become a hip thing. Even TV and film stars clamor for guest spots on children's shows.

Her babbling, giggling Baby Di! performance—from the first starkly moving delivery-room cries in the "Rugrats" feature film—have made her a top choice of Hollywood casting directors. And her peers now consider Charendoff a major new talent among those actors following in the footsteps of the late Mel "Bugs Bunny" Blanc.

But "Rugrats" is only one of the series that Charendoff is in this fall. The petite, 23-year-old Toronto native also plays Spot, a neurotic hen in "Disney's 101 Dalmatians." Bubbles, one of the "Powerpuff Girls" on Cartoon Network; and she's lined up a parade of guest spots.

While Charendoff is usually only heard, not seen, her ability to act is as important as her voice.

"After all, Blanc was a great actor, he had great timing, comedic gifts. He didn't just do a Brooklyn accent, he became those characters," said Mandy Patinkin, who recently won an animation Annie Award for his performance as the Brain on Warner Bros. lab mouse buddy series, "Finky & the Brain."

"When I do the Brain, people tell me I bunch over and cock an eyebrow; I become the Brain," said Patinkin, a comedy clob impersonator tapped to perform Chief Quimby 13 years ago on "Inspector Gadget."

Voice actors—take an old hand like Frank Welker, for instance—are nor-

mal-looking people who undergo an amazing transformation once they're in a recording studio. They make weird, wild, wonderful sounds—as if they were possessed by zany or bizarre characters.

"I tend to do a lot of goofy, crazy stuff. Chins, dogs, cats, motorcycles, all kinds of animals," Welker said after a recent recording session near Warner Bros. Widely regarded as one of the foremost talents in the field, he has hundreds of credits over the past two decades, working steadily in children's animated shows. He is Santa's Little Helper in "The Simpsons" and Freddie Jones in "Scooby Doo." He played a dog that explodes on an episode of

That means Hollywood animation studios are running at high gear, hiring voice specialists as well as on-camera actors who enjoy the quick sessions—no need for wardrobe, makeup and hair—and the chance to play out of type or do work their children can appreciate.

"It's a great gig, it's really fun, and if you're vain and worried about the way you look, you have that on your side," said Flea, bassist in the rock group Red Hot Chili Peppers, who plays a mute but emotively noisy 4-year-old, Donnie, in the "The Wild Thornberrys," another Nickelodeon series. It's a role he took in large part, he said, to please his 10-year-old

"The best people have this endless, ever-expanding bag of tricks," said West, another top-tier actor who has a starring role in the upcoming "Futurama," from "Simpsons" creator Matt Groening.

"It's all theater of the mind... all the worlds you create are based on the 2-inch strip of flesh in your throat," West said. "It's not this goofy collection of witty little voices. It's real damn acting."

The ultimate tribute to the voice-over profession has come from TV and film stars, who have been flocking to the recording studios for feature roles and guest spots, a trend started by "The Simpsons."

Sure enough, a recent "Simpsons" featured Alec Baldwin, Kim Basinger and Ron Howard in an episode about celebrities mobbed by overeager fans. But in real life, celebrities are practically nobbling animating casting offices.

"I'm getting calls from (celebrity) agents all the time," said Leslie Lamers, casting director at Warner Bros. Animation.

But regular roles require voice specialists, which is why Jamie Thomason, casting director at Disney Television Animation, hired Charendoff for a key part—a neurotic hen—in "Disney's 101 Dalmatians," a new 65-episode TV series.

Charendoff recalls practicing silly voices as a little girl. She turned professional as a 13-year-old in the title role in "Hello Kitty," a 20-episode animated series.

Her facile vocalizations landed her roles in the video feature "Scooby Doo on Zombie Island" and "New Batman/Superman Adventures." She was the doll Molly in the Halloween episode of "Sabrina the Teenage Witch."

Unlike most of her voice-over brethren, Charendoff has a fair number of live-action credits, including ABC-TV's "Sabrina Goes to Rome," playing a 17-year-old witch who gets her first kiss.

Of course the role of baby Dylan will mean she'll be playing even younger—her dialogue is limited to the words "Mimi!" and "Poopy!"—but she plays it with passion.

Barbara Wright, casting director for "Rugrats" production company Klasky Csupo, said Charendoff was her first choice for the part. "It was her and there wasn't any runner-up."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



Tara Charendoff is the voice of Baby Di!, on Rugrats.

"The X-Files." In feature films, he was Khan in "Mulan" and the murderous female alien Sil in "Species."

Welker and other voice actors create the characters that are later given final form by animation artists and, by all measure, greeted eagerly by audiences.

Indeed, a number of network and cable outlets—notably ABC, Nickelodeon, Fox, and WB—feature well-known animated kids' programming on Saturday mornings, and more of it on weekdays before and after school.

Fox's successful prime-time shows "The Simpsons" and "King of the Hill" have spurred the network to order the animated "Futurama" and "Family Guy," to begin early next year. UPN will soon introduce "Dilbert" and there is talk that other networks are considering prime-time projects.

daughter, Clara. "But it's not for everybody," he said, adding that some actors find it difficult to act if they can't use their faces and body language.

After all, acting is the soul of the craft, even amid a dizzying array of technical advances in TV and film production, said Bob Kurtz, veteran commercial animator and governor of the animation-peer group of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences. The basic tool is still just a microphone.

"To put personality in a voice, to be dramatic, comedic and in a sense to hit your mark vocally, it takes quite a bit of talent," said Kurtz.

Billy West, the new voice of Woody in Fox's upcoming series "Woody Woodpecker," said it takes hard work to stay on top.

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He's winter's warmest snowman

By Susan King

HOLLYWOOD—Michael Keaton has gone from Batman to snowman.

As the star of the new family fantasy "Jack Frost," Keaton plays a cool dad and budding rock star who tragically dies in a car crash one Christmas. Jack gets the opportunity to become—quite literally—an even cooler father to his young son, Charlie, when he returns to Earth as the magical snowman the next holiday. The Warner Bros. film opened last Friday in the U.S.

The talking and walking snowman, which reflects Keaton's bouncy personality, was created by Jim Henson's Creature Shop ("George of the Jungle," "Dr. Dolittle") in Burbank and by Industrial Light & Magic, which created computer-generated images for Jack Frost's more action-packed scenes.

In a room at the Creature Shop, puppeteer Denise Cheshire recently suited up to demonstrate the Jack Frost puppet, an impressive three-snowball creature made of foam latex. Hanging at its sides were the mechanical arms, covered in brown latex to simulate branches.

Besides Cheshire, there is a puppeteer at the performance control station who is performing the radio-control arms, those only require one performer.

One of the puppeteers also serves as the performance coordinator. "Part of what you have to do is get those four people to work all as one character," Brimmon said.

Thirty-nine parts comprise the variations of Jack Frost seen in the film. Among the Jacks in the film are a meeting

snowman, a prone version for when Jack is accidentally swept up by a snowplow and a seated version in which the lower snowball pootches out in front.

The elaborate costume has an inner structure made of foam. "That is what gives it the structure," Britton said. "When she moves her leg, you don't want her knee pushing out. You want that whole ball to move. That is why she is surrounded by that foam and wrapped in spandex."

Before the Creature Shop became involved in the project in early 1997, Warner Bros. had built a prototype of the suit. "The prototype had a silicone skin which had a neat translucent (quality) to it, which was like real snow," Britton said. "The downside is that it was incredibly heavy. So that made the suit a real pig to wear."

This suit has a foam latex skin that was painted with a layer of white silicone. Before the silicone cured, they pressed artificial snow into the silicone surface. "When it cures, it bonds into the artificial snow," Britton said.

Originally, George Clooney was set to play Jack Frost, so the head was sculpted to resemble the "ER" heartthrob. Keaton, who replaced original director Sam Raimi, came on board the project very late in the game.

"We sort of had to play catch-up," Britton said. "Once it became Michael Keaton, we didn't change the head completely. We did some signature things to the chin and to the lips because Michael Keaton has this little mouth and talks out of the front of his mouth. You can only do as much to reflect the performer."

The snowman also had to look like it was made by young Charlie. The suit even has several child's handprints

imprinted into the skin. "If it looked like a snowman designed by a Warner feature animator, it would be a fun character," Britton said. "But it would also make it harder to believe that a child made the snowman."

For the snowman's coal eyes, the designers frosted what would be the white of the eyes and kept the center point "real shiny to give it focus," Britton says.

The eyebrows, which were made out of juniper bush, were added so there would be more than just white snow making up Jack's face.

Keaton prerecorded his dialogue and "we would feed those lines into our computer system and then record the performance of the animatronic head in sync with that." The only part we prerecorded is the performance of the mouth for the lip-sync stuff. The rest of the stuff, the eyes and brows, are kept alive by the performer so you can keep a certain amount of spontaneity."

Industrial Light & Magic supplied the computer-generated images of Jack Frost for the things the puppet couldn't physically do. "We did all the big action shots of the snowman flying through the air, jumping or falling apart," said Joe Letteri, Industrial Light & Magic's visual effects supervisor.

Before production began, the company photographed Cheshire in the snowman's suit "from many different angles," Letteri said. "We built a CG (computer generated) model that replicated it. Ultimately, the CG model needs to be the same character (as the puppet). When we build the basic model, we have to do all the facial expressions in the same way they do."

Both the Creature Shop and Industrial Light & Magic wrestled with several problems dur-



Michael Keaton

ing production, especially those related to shooting a white object on the equally white snow. Just as real snow does, Jack Frost tended to get dirty and yellow during the shoot.

"Everybody has their own ideas of what a snowman should be," Letteri says. "Ultimately, we had to fall in line with what Troy's ideas of what the snowman would be."

Britton said it was also difficult to figure out how the snowman should move because it doesn't have feet. The twig arms were also a problem.

They were much too small for Cheshire to fit into.

But, said Britton, "if you could see that those arms were big enough (for a person), it throws the gag away. We wanted to make that illusion as strong as we possibly can. The big part of the illusion was hiding the proportions of a human performing inside so that the audience doesn't see them and it doesn't look like a performer in a suit."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

'ER' tackles social issues and stays atop the ratings



By Greg Braxton

HOLLYWOOD—It seemed like a natural for an evening out—two lovers going to a nightclub to hear some cool jazz. But the situation was anything but simple for Dr. Peter Benton, County General Memorial Hospital's intense, high-profile black surgeon played by Eriq La Salle and one of the central figures in "ER."

The show's writers have woven Benton's struggle to adjust to his relationship with white surgeon Elizabeth Corday (Alex Kingston) through most of this season and last. In this particular episode, Benton faces his anxiety about being seen with Corday at the club, which has a largely black clientele.

While Benton fights his own internal battles, the emergency room corridor is lined with unfolding stories of class, race, cultural diversity, AIDS, disabilities and prejudice in all its forms—themes that course through the show season after season. And while "ER" moves at a breathless pace with its trademark rapid-fire medical terminology, quick camera moves, surreal happenings and romantic entanglements, it takes its time dealing with significant social issues.

"It's a format that's working. The landmark medical drama is television's most popular series—and at \$850 million over the next three years, its most expensive. Last Thursday, "ER" celebrated its 100th episode still at the top of the ratings pack. Amid all of the care and healing taking place at the emergency room of the Chicago facility, tempers flare, romantic tensions unravel and the personal lives of the physicians require almost as much mending as the medical problems of the patients they're treating.

Lydia Woodward, an executive producer on the series, said the story lines explored on "ER" flow naturally out of the characters, and not because of any agenda put forth by the writers or producers.

"All of our storytelling starts with the character, not with the issue," Woodward said. "The only message that we ever want to put forth is that these are really hard jobs that these people are doing—emotionally demanding. These people see a lot of things that most of us don't see, and they have certain ways of handling it."

Nevertheless the series gets high marks from outsiders for its diligence in tackling often-controversial issues with a dimension and intensity seldom seen on network television.

"What they have done on 'ER' is nothing short of revolutionary in dealing with real-life issues among physicians that have rarely come to light," said Dr. Gary Cohen, a board member of the Pacific Oaks Medical Group, which he called the largest HIV treatment facility in the country. "It's shown physicians as human beings, not as magicians."

By slowly advancing the plot on the Benton-Corday relationship, the show's producers have been able to touch on a number of complex aspects surrounding interracial dating, cultural identity and the difficulty of romance in the workplace. And they have made it as much Corday's story as Benton's.

"The race issue played a small part of that interaction in the beginning, but then we let that fall away," Woodward said. "Now it's basically about two hard-working individuals who have trouble seeing each other. We approach it as 'How would two people juggle all of this?'"

"It's good for TV to show that interracial relationships do happen," said Karen Grigsby Bates, a commentator on National Public Radio. "People on television dramas have diversity, while sitcoms are still largely segregated."

As they have with La Salle's character, the writers have spent several years fol-

lowing Jeanie Boulet (Gloria Reuben), a physician's assistant who is HIV-positive. The series shows her dealing with her own health crisis while being determined to help others. She contracted the virus from her estranged husband, who had been having extramarital affairs. Reuben's character moved from anger to forgiveness in a series of poignant episodes.

In previous seasons, the writers used Reuben's character to get at the public's reaction to those who are living with HIV, exploring fear, discrimination and, ultimately, acceptance.

"There are an awful lot of quality people and health care workers infected with HIV, and this was a story that needed to be told," Cohen said. "Jeanie is shown as being a competent person dealing with a real-life issue."

The themes the writing staff chooses are rarely easy ones. The drama has also dealt with the inward struggle of Dr. John Carter (Noah Wyle) as he tries to reconcile his lifestyle and choice of profession with his silver-spoon, upper-class upbringing. And the abrasiveness of attending physician Kerry Weaver (Laura Innes), who walks with a crutch and has run-ins with almost everyone around her.

"When you have these familiar characters and audiences form a kind of personal relationship with them, it's a fertile way to show how they would deal with certain societal or quality-of-life issues," said Innes, who joined the series in its second season. "The value of my character is that Kerry has a disability, but she functions extremely well in a high-pressure environment, and she has an expertise that makes her colleagues respect her."

Had Kerry Weaver been written as a victim, the role would not have interested Innes: "Usually disabled people are portrayed as victims, on the outside looking in. They are pitied. Kerry is not any of those things. I don't want to sound highfalutin, but TV is the perfect format to change that image."

Despite the series' avoidance of getting on platforms, scholars and others suggest that by taking on difficult topics, what ultimately results is simply good television.

"What they've done, particularly with Jeanie Boulet, is terrific," said Stuart Fischhoff, professor of media psychology at California State University, Los Angeles. "It's provided some of the most moving hours of television. When she reacts to things in the hospital, all the audience needs to see is a close-up of her face, and that speaks volumes. They don't have to keep announcing what her affliction is."

Innes agreed: "I think we've made some inroads into people having an idea that HIV just doesn't hit junkies and gay men. Gloria did a beautiful job, and it's nice to see a different face on that kind of problem."

At first even the studio that produces the series didn't have a sense of the show's potential. And then executives began seeing the footage.

"The first 10 episodes of this show exceeded everyone's expectations, and during the last five years it's just been running hot and steady," said Tony Jonas, president of Warner Bros. Television.

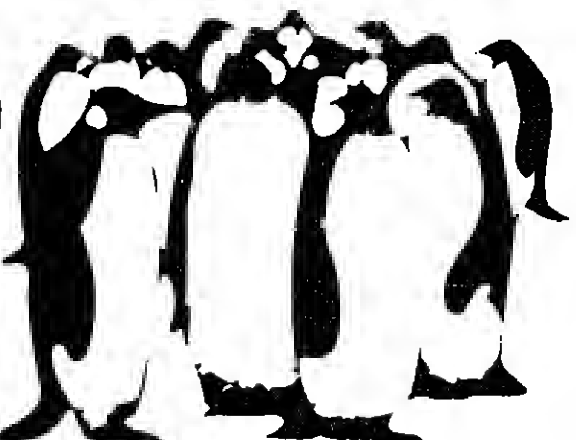
The writers slipped in a subtle nod to the show's survival with a story line that runs throughout "ER's" 100th episode. In this week's show, the hospital's oldest patient, Ruth Johnson (Anne Pitoniaki), who was born at the facility 100 years ago, is honored during the hospital's 100th anniversary.

Said Innes of hitting 100: "It's a bit of a surreal event. I don't think it registered too much with everyone until the day of the cake-cutting. But other than that, there's still the work to do. And we're here every day."

STAR ONLINE
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AROUND TOWN



Delegation returns from Yugoslavia

A JORDANIAN press delegation, which was invited by Yugoslav Airlines, has returned from Yugoslavia after a week-long visit to the country. The delegation which met with several Yugoslav officials included Mr Nader 'Ajilat, Mr Mohammed Salam, Mr Faisal Shboul, Mr Nabil Ghishan, Ms 'Aishah Al Razem and Ms Fardous Al Masri. Details on the visit will be published in *The Star's* next issue.



Hotel Inter-Continental Jordan donates trees GAM

AS IT has become the custom, Hotel Inter-Continental Jordan donated three trees for the Greater Amman Municipality. Mr. Jonathan Soper, General Manager of the Inter-Continental accompanied with members of the hotel's Environmental Committee visited the Greater Amman Municipality and helped the Municipality officials to plant the trees.

The event is part of several other environmental activities carried out by the hotel's management in its continuous efforts to preserve and protect Jordan's environment.

OFF THE WALL

By Rana Haddad

Trust

THE OTHER day, I went out to a supermarket to buy some chips. While I was looking for my favorite kind, a young boy entered and asked the man if there was "Trust".

The man pointed to a certain corner of the shop, the boy went there and came back holding a bar of chocolate.

I was expecting to see something else, but no, there was only the bar. I was just waiting there to pay and leave, something which I did when the owner finally realized I was there.

Trust is the core of our lives. It has a great impact on our social relations. When you trust someone, you speak out your mind to him, share your secrets, dreams, joys and fears.

Nevertheless, the true essence of this sacred word remains an unanswered question. When I told a friend of mine about what happened in the supermarket, he just laughed.

He believes that everyone needs a kind of "utopian trust", where sometimes a peace of chocolate could become your own true friend! "Imagine, after eating this mouth-watering bar of chocolate which is called Trust, you'll start trusting everyone, you may even start with trusting yourself and your abilities," he added.

Just ask yourself a simple question: How many people do you really trust these days? Is it possible to give a number?

If you want, my opinion, it is not easy to find a truthful person these days. But what would it be like if you spend your life without having someone to trust?

Trust is a basic human need. Deep in the depths of your heart, you seek peace with your own self and with others.

However, trusting yourself is the most difficult thing. Unless you believe in your self, you will get nowhere. You will also find it difficult to communicate with others, because you feel insecure about everything, including people.

The power is within our own minds to change and progress. Moreover, through experience, one might be able to choose those who deserve his or her trust and love. It is a bliss to find a true companion. In a world of deception and conspiracy.

Trust is a slogan, a bridge for people's aspirations to meet together. It is a communion of confidence and dependance that must remain a sacred code in society.

Islamic sculptures A Relationship between man and his Creator

By Kofi Attah
Special to The Star

MODERN ART is an irrepressible vehicle of conveying messages. It has become the saint of modern culture. Lazim Bazim Dawood, an Iraqi sculptor has been able to combine all the qualities of art and exploit how meaning is contingent upon the viewer's background and developed to the artist's advantage.

In his exhibition entitled Islamic Sculptures now on display at the Buran Gallery for Fine Arts, he explores human perceptions and behaviors in different social and political situations. Going through the exhibition, the visitor is struck by two outstanding pieces he dedicates to peace. These are more deeply involved in the problem since they point out the present state of affairs in his country. His cause and method of expression are both shaped by socio-political events.

Not everything in the gallery depicts the socio-political zig zag of his country. The visitor is welcomed by a giant fish displayed at the entrance, he calls this the fish of fortune because of the religious inscription it has. Another two pieces bear the verses of 'Ayat Al Kuris' from the Holy Quran. But the pieces are endless and various. In one of the works is a figure of a miniature city of Mosul—his birth place—modeled in ceramics.

Dawood was born in 1952



in Mosul, about 400 kilometers from Baghdad. He studied and graduated from the

University of Baghdad in 1975 and 1985 and earned his BA and MA in fine arts.

At the moment he is preparing for his doctorate in fine arts from the University of Baghdad. At the same time he teaches art at the University of Mosul.

For a long time he has been fascinated by Islamic sculptures, but these are enriched by universal themes that come out distinctly in his works. His statues of fish, cities and general human conduct is employed to give a stark effect.

But he goes far beyond and dwells on the spiritual realm of consolation. His calligraphic work is devoted to the praises of Allah and the spiritual well being of his fellow men. His pieces depict a harmonious relationship between man and his creator.

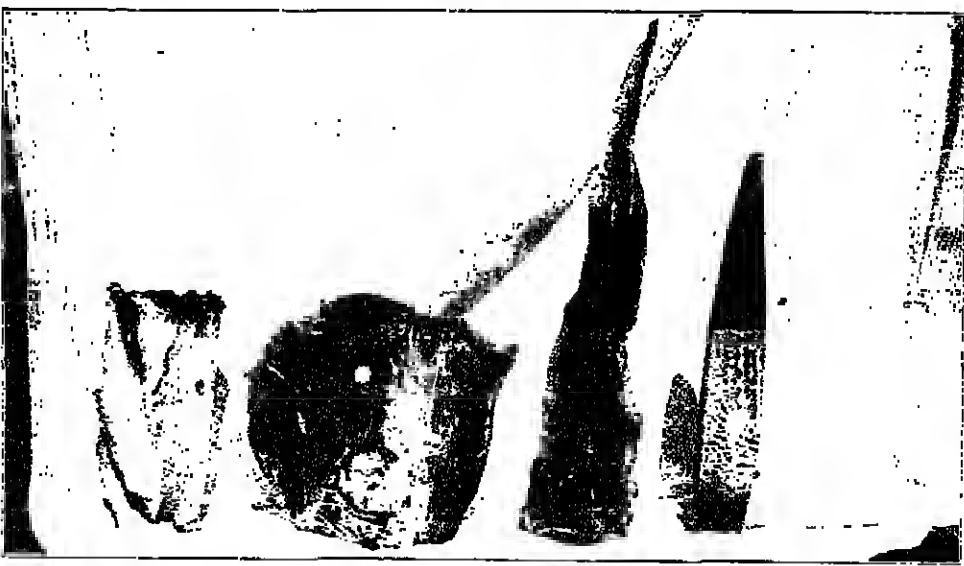
Most of his 32 pieces in the exhibition are abstracts in their surface rendition, a typical Islamic abstraction. This

brings out the spirituality of the Holy Quran.

Mixing sculpture with calligraphy, he uses substances which easily attract the audience.

The carefully selected medium is chosen for the perfection of his work, its proportion and the harmony of its movements. Dawood exposes the viewer to diverse situations in Iraq. All the same the presence of a hidden message is undeniable. The exhibition "Islamic Sculptures" represent the work of an artist whose innovating spirit gives the visitor another facet of his imagination.

The exhibition continues till 26 December 1998 everyday from 9 am to 8 pm except on Fridays at the Buran Gallery for Fine Arts, Al Hamra street, in Sweifiha.

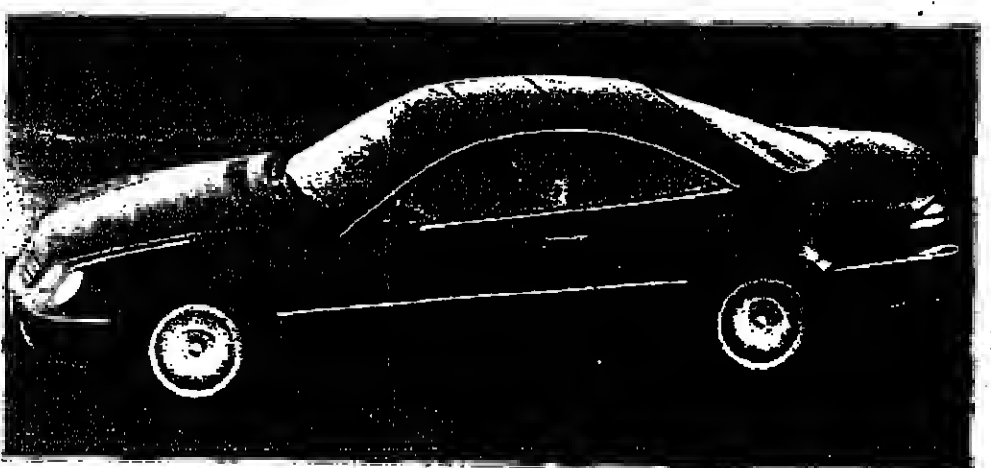


Hotel Inter-Continental Jordan launched Christmas seasons in style

CHILDREN FROM around the Kingdom joined Hotel Inter-Continental Jordan to launch the joyous Christmas season at the hotel. The Children lighted the beautiful and colorful Christmas tree which was set for the happy occasion in the main lobby of the hotel.

During the lighting ceremony, Mr Jonathan Soper, general manager of the Hotel presented the four winners of the young artists competition organized by the hotel last month their awards. The young artists competition demonstrated the vision of children in regard of the world's environmental situation in the year 2000. Other students from the competition were also present to celebrate the long awaited event.

The new Mercedes-Benz CL: in a class of its own



STUTTGART—Once again, Mercedes-Benz is injecting impetus into the top end of the luxury car market. To follow the successful new S-Class, the Stuttgart-based car manufacturer is now to unveil another model with special attributes: the large Mercedes coupe. The new CL will make its worldwide debut next March and will be appearing in the showrooms of the Mercedes-Benz brand sales and service outlets by fall 1999.

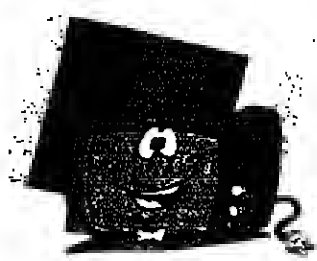
The two-door car exudes an unmistakable aura. Formal elegance is combined with technical perfection to produce a synthesis of dynamism and beauty.

The new model bears the hallmarks of the Mercedes style, such as the familiar four-eyed face with the oval double head lamps, reinterpreted in a new and exclusive manner to underline the unique identity of the sports coupe. The soft, rounded contours of the wings, the extended silhouette with the arresting sweep of the curved roof and the new design of the wrap-around rear windshield highlight the car's distinctive features.

The same approach can be found in all aspects of the car's technology: the Mercedes coupe leads the world car market with innovations hitherto

unseen. The principal innovation is the completely new Active Body Control (ABC) suspension system which creates optimum levels of sportiness and comfort, surpassing anything previously available on the market. Using sensor signals and special hydraulic cylinders on the axles, ABC virtually eliminates the roll and pitch movements familiar to drivers when setting off, cornering and braking. The whole process lasts for just a fraction of a second, which means that the damping effort adapts to any situation instantaneously. This takes the driving experience into an entirely new dimension.

ON THE BOX



Abu Al Hana!

By Ibtihal Ahmad
Special to The Star

WE ARE used to seeing Duraid Laham depicting the role of the extraordinary in his television programs—indeed he goes from one extreme to the other. Sometimes we see him as the tyrannical leader who cares about nothing but his own satisfaction, at another time we see him as the meek who cannot do anything right, or the law abiding citizen who wants to live in a fair and peaceful world. In fact, we have seen him in so many roles that it is difficult to recall the number of characters he assumed in the past 20 years or so. And it's only fair to say that he perfected each and every one of those roles.

When Laham decided upon his present character—Abu Al Hana—viewers were not surprised as much as they were a little disturbed about this choice. In the comedy program, which is a re-run on JTV's Arabic Channel, we are presented with the character of the Arab man. Abu Al Hana, portrays everything we hate in the character of the Arab male, he can not even speak without dithering, and when he talks, he always says the wrong thing, and stumbles on the wrong foot. His character is so irritating it makes the viewers feel like shouting or switching the television off.

But the veteran actor keeps viewers interested because they know he has a point to prove. In fact, Abu Al Hana, who has extreme difficulty in expressing himself or asserting his own views, comes up with words of wisdom, ones which are badly needed in our world today. He too cannot stand the mishaps in our society, and wants them to be put right. But things can only go in the right direction if you have big "Wasta", or know somebody who can push things along the way. But being a poor small time employee in the ministry, he can only stand by and take the hail of insults from his superiors.

In the program we can also get some idea about how things are run in official ministries, and how most of its employees are bored as well as inefficient, indeed we see them most of the time either gossiping or having tea and snacks. Abu Al Hana also presents to the viewers the pathetic state of the hierarchical system in government departments in the Arab World, where petty officials are always frightened of their superiors. For instance, Abu Al Hana feels uneasy when he is summoned by director of his department.

However the main character is not always as obedient and meek as viewers first think. Sometimes he flies over the handle when his wife criticizes his mother, or even tries to make the odd comment about her mother-in-law for instance. In this respect, Abu Al Hana represents the traditional Arab male who puts the comfort and respect of his mother before anything else. Indeed he carries this notion so far, that the viewers feel he is subservient to his mother's wishes.

In turn, this behavior introduces the much contested concept of rivalry between wives and mothers-in-law in the Arab World.

The wife tries to instill her personality in her house, but the strong will and sometime cunning mother-in-law stops her cold. The conflict between the two women in his life, makes Abu Al Hana irritable and apologetic, because no matter what he does he can not please either of them. For viewers, just keep watching for more.

AGENDA

Exhibitions

■ The American Center features a poster exhibition marking the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The exhibition, which includes 30 posters reflecting the history of human rights movement in the US, will be on display until 30 December.

■ The 10th anniversary exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists, is currently showing at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Al Weibdeh, until 28 January 1999.

by Dr Mazin Asfour at 5:30 pm.

■ The American Center is showing *Jingle All The Way*, today (Thursday), 17 December. The movie, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, begins at 5 pm.

■ The European Film Festival is currently on display at the Royal Cultural Center. The festival, showing several European movies, will last till Friday, 18 December.

■ On the occasion of the Holy month of Ramadan, the French Cultural Center holds a special film festival this week. The festival, which features five movies from the 1990s, will be held daily at Cinema Philadelphia, and will begin on 19 December, at 8 pm.

■ The British Council will show the movie *The Bostonians*, starring Christopher Reeve and Vanessa Redgrave, on 22 December, at 6 pm.

■ In celebration of Christmas and the New Year, the National Music Conservatory's band will hold a special concert of light musical pieces on 19 December, at the Terra Sancta Cultural Center. The concert, conducted by Mrs Barbara Johnson, will be held at 8 pm.

Lectures

■ The American Center hosts an Interfaith Celebration, on 21 December at 8 pm. The special event, due to be held at the auditorium, will feature prominent Arab-American poet/writer Elmaz Abinader reciting poetry, traditional Arabic music and Christmas carols by students from the American Community School.

Films

■ The Darat Al Funun hosts an art meeting today, Thursday, 17 December. The Iraqi artist Ismael Fattah and critic Kifah Habib will join in a talk meeting after a film show, due to be presented

Internet Al Rehab opens internet door

A NEW internet center is now open in Amman. The Rehab Internet Center was opened at the beginning of this month in Abdoun.

Many people and internet lovers attended the opening ceremony. One of the supervisors in the center, told *The Star* that he and his partners were hoping for such a center in their area for long time.

He added that by establishing the center, we offer the people and inhabitants the chance to surf through the well-developed cyberspace technology. The Rehab Internet promotes its clients and visitors the highest surfing speed available in Amman.

An open invitation is made to all those interested, to discover the real atmosphere of surfing. The Center, located beside Demi-Tasse Cafe and Khan Murjan coffee shop, is open daily from 11 am till midnight.



Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Éclaboussures

La fuite des capitaux

D'après les estimations d'un rapport émis par une entreprise américaine spécialisée dans le domaine des placements financiers arabes à l'étranger, ces derniers ont constamment augmenté au cours des deux dernières décennies. En 1978, ils étaient estimés à 150 milliards de dollars, en 1983, à 275 milliards de dollars, en 1991, à 600 milliards de dollars et aujourd'hui, ces capitaux sont évalués à plus de 820 milliards de dollars. Cette fuite des capitaux est-elle le signe de la corruption galopante qui gangrène les pays arabes? Il y a fort à parier que oui. En octobre dernier, Watson, le président du Fonds monétaire international mettait en garde contre ce fleau qui, selon lui, est le plus grand péril qu'affronte actuellement l'économie mondiale, assurant de plus que cette question occupe une place essentielle dans l'agenda du Comité international pour le développement, le Fonds monétaire international avait ainsi mis en garde les États contre deux aspects qui peuvent déclencher, à terme, une véritable récession économique mondiale.

D'une part il s'agit de l'augmentation de la concentration des richesses, et donc du taux de pauvreté. Il s'agit donc de promouvoir, de façon adéquate, des politiques visant à redistribuer les richesses au sein de la société. D'autre part, il s'agit de la corruption généralisée qui frappe le monde, engendrée en partie par l'extrême libéralisation de l'économie. On sait déjà qu'une grande part de la richesse des pays arabes est entre les mains d'une minorité, le fossé entre les privilégiés et le reste de la population s'élargissant sans cesse d'années en années. Mais de nombreux citoyens de pays arabes n'ont cure des recommandations du Fonds monétaire. Ce qu'ils constatent c'est que dans leur pays, l'argent fuit vers l'étranger et n'est pas investi sur place pour donner des emplois à la population, et faire progresser l'économie locale et la société. D'ailleurs, même à l'étranger, la part de cet argent qui "travaille" est minime. Le reste est entassé.

Y. A.-S.

Vous voulez écrire en français? Alors n'hésitez pas à collaborer à la rédaction du Jourdain. Que vous soyez passionné de politique, d'économie, de société, vos articles nous intéressent!

Stéphane Foucart
5664153

Une nouvelle crise irakienne?

Le Premier ministre britannique Tony Blair a réuni son Conseil de Défense et s'est entretenu avec le président américain Bill Clinton du regain de tension avec l'Irak. Le chef d'état-major des armées britanniques, le général Charles Guthrie, a informé Tony Blair et les ministres concernés (Défense et Affaires étrangères) de la situation dans le Golfe mardi après-midi, a précisé le porte-parole. En début de soirée, Tony Blair s'est ensuite entretenu pendant quinze minutes avec le président Clinton. Le porte-parole a toutefois souligné qu'une intervention ne se décidait pas en «claquant des doigts». «Le rapport Butler est arrivé tard mardi soir. Nous discutons encore avec nos alliés», a-t-il ajouté, interrompé par l'imminence d'une intervention. Le fait que le monde musulman se prépare au début du Ramadan le week-end prochain sera aussi «un facteur» que le gouvernement prendra en compte, ont ajouté le porte-parole et le ministre des Affaires étrangères, Robin Cook. Ce dernier a qualifié de «très grave» le rapport du chef des inspecteurs de l'ONU chargés du désarmement de l'Irak, Richard Butler. Londres est prêt, le cas échéant, à une frappe militaire, a ajouté M. Cook, soulignant que les résolutions de l'ONU sur l'Irak fournissent, à son avis, «l'autorité légale» nécessaire à une action. «Nous avons dit la dernière fois que nous ne donnerions pas d'avertissement supplémentaire à Saddam Hussein (avant une intervention), vous comprendrez que je ne vais pas commencer à dire ce que nous pourrions faire à présent», a souligné M. Cook. La Grande-Bretagne dispose d'un dispositif militaire important dans le Golfe: douze chasseurs-bombardiers sont stationnés au Koweït, six en Arabie saoudite et quatre en Turquie. Le Royaume-Uni a aussi une frégate dans les eaux du Golfe, le HMS Boxer, ainsi qu'un autre navire équipé de canons, mais pas de porte-avions. «Il n'y a pas actuellement de plan pour modifier ce dispositif. Si une intervention militaire contre l'Irak devait être décidée, nous disposons de forces suffisantes», pour y participer, a indiqué le ministre de la Défense. De son côté, le ministre des Affaires étrangères a de nouveau mis en garde ses ressortissants contre tout déplacement en Irak et aux alentours du pays. «Nous répétons notre mise en garde contre tout voyage en Irak, mais aussi dans les zones frontalières de l'Iran avec l'Irak», a indiqué un porte-parole du Foreign Office.

Politique

Le droit des Palestiniens à « leur propre terre »

C'est un moment historique qu'a vécu le peuple palestinien, au début de cette semaine, avec la visite du Président Bill Clinton. Si la situation concrète n'a pas évolué, le glissement de la politique régionale des États-Unis laisse entrevoir une éventuelle rupture avec l'intransigeance israélienne. D'ores et déjà Benjamin Netanyahou a déclaré qu'il ne céderait à « aucune pression ».

Paroles historiques pour un voyage historique. Pour la première visite d'un Président américain dans un territoire palestinien, Bill Clinton a reconnu lundi aux Palestiniens le droit de «déterminer leur

propre destinée sur leur propre terre». A ces paroles sans précédent de la part d'un Président des États-Unis, a répondu le geste tout aussi historique du Conseil national palestinien. En présence de Bill Clinton, les

centaines de membres du CNP - le «Parlement» palestinien - ont révoqué les clauses de la Charte palestinienne appelant à la destruction d'Israël. En effet, à l'appel du Président de l'Autorité palestinienne, Yasser

Arafat, qui leur demandait de réaffirmer à main levée le vote déjà effectué en 1996 en ce sens, les membres du Conseil, réunis à Gaza, se sont dressés et ont levé la main droite, «quasi-unaniment» selon les responsables du CNP. Les voix n'ont pas été décomptées. M. Netanyahou avait demandé un vote à main levée, faute de quoi il menaçait d'interrompre le retrait israélien de Cisjordanie. «Benjamin Netanyahou a fait part de sa satisfaction quant à l'issue de ce vote du CNP, a indiqué son porte-parole, qui est intervenu à l'insistance du gouvernement israélien.»

Standing ovation pour Arafat

Cependant, le porte-parole a ajouté que «Bibi», qui fera face lundi à la Knesset à un vote de censure de la part de son opposition d'extrême droite, continuait à insister pour que les toutes autres conditions israéliennes soient remplies.

Cependant, Yasser Arafat a tenu à adresser, au cours de son discours, un message qui se voulait ferme à l'attention des dirigeants israéliels. Le leader palestinien a ainsi été salué par une standing ovation lorsqu'il a demandé la libération des prisonniers politiques palestiniens et l'arrêt de la construction de colonies de peuplement dans les territoires occupés. «Nous voudrions que nos frères retournent à la maison», s'est-il exclamé, réclamant également la fin de l'occupation de tous les territoires occupés par Israël depuis 1967, y compris «Jérusalem la

Verbatim

Morceaux choisis du discours de Bill Clinton devant les dirigeants palestiniens, lundi à Gaza.

«Je vous remercie d'avoir levé vos mains [en votant pour l'abrogation des clauses spécifiant la destruction d'Israël, NDLR]. Je vous remercie pour votre rejet des clauses [de la Charte] appelant à la destruction d'Israël. (...) Vous avez fait une bonne chose en levant vos mains. Ceci n'a rien à voir avec le gouvernement d'Israël. Vous allez éliminer le peuple d'Israël. Vous allez toucher les gens dans la rue. Vous allez toucher leur cœur. Je sais que le peuple palestinien est à un carrefour: derrière vous, une histoire de dépossession et de dispersion. Devant vous, la possibilité de construire votre avenir sur votre propre terre. (...) Vous êtes arrivés là grâce à un engagement envers la paix et la négociation. Vous l'avez réaffirmé aujourd'hui. Je pense que c'est le seul moyen de satisfaire les aspirations de votre peuple. (...) Tout Palestinien influent (...) doit se faire une mission de proscrire de l'esprit des enfants l'image de kamikazes glorieux et de mettre fin à cette pratique qui consiste à parler de paix dans un endroit et à prêcher la haine dans un autre. (...) Les dirigeants palestiniens doivent agir contre tout ceux qui ont recouru à la violence et au terrorisme et ceux qui les soutiennent. (...) Quels que soient notre ressentiment ou notre peine, il n'y a pas de raison pour tuer des innocents. (...) Il est absolument faux d'identifier les Palestiniens en particulier et l'Islam en général au terrorisme. (...) Je comprends votre inquiétude devant les activités de colonisation, les confiscations de terre et les destructions de maisons. Il faut de la détermination et du courage pour faire la paix et parfois encore plus pour persévérer sur cette voie, celle de la paix.»



Le Proche Orient dans la presse française

La chute de l'or noir

La crise du pétrole à laquelle est confronté le monde depuis maintenant un an est l'un des sujets publiés dans Libération du 11 décembre: «Il n'est pas encore perceptible par le consommateur occidental, mais elle sème les soubresauts dans les prix des produits pétroliers. S'agissant de pétrole, s'agissant de pétrole, s'agissant de pétrole. Aujourd'hui que le baril vaut 9-10 dollars, alors qu'il y a un an il coûtait plus de 15, moins 18 dollars, Libération rappelle que «c'est donc à une véritable dégringolade que la planète assiste en direct». Un Krach, poursuit le quotidien, c'est que le phénomène semble durable. Car les causes de la crise sont de plusieurs ordres. Économique, d'abord, avec les effets dévastateurs de la crise asiatique... géologique, avec des progrès permanents des compagnies pétrolières de forer toujours plus loin, toujours plus profond. Politique, avec des pays occupant peu à peu des compagnies étrangères des domaines miniers inexplorés. Diplomatique, enfin, avec une organisation des pays exportateurs de pétrole (Opec) incapable de s'unifier et de se discipliner pour réduire une offre surabondante. Le journal constate que «le mélange du tout est en train de faire exploser les règles du club très fermé des compagnies pétrolières et des pays producteurs, menés traditionnellement par les géants d'Arabie». Quant aux pays du Golfe, Alexander Schwarzbrod, l'auteur de l'article, explique qu'aujourd'hui ces pays «qui vivent eux deux tiers du pétrole, sont dans l'impasse». Elles (les monarchies du Golfe) se sont engagées à prolonger de six mois supplémentaires les réductions de production de leur décriées cette année dans le cadre de l'Opec. Sans grand espoir, il est en effet évident que certains membres, comme le Venezuela ou l'Iran, ne respectent pas les consignes de modération. La tension dans la zone est donc à son comble.



La panique gagne les pays producteurs de pétrole

Bill Clinton. «Ce brutal regain, poursuit le journal, illustre la nette détérioration de la situation dans la région. Le Premier ministre israélien menace donc de suspendre les retraits, et cela - selon Le Monde - aura incontestablement un effet sur les accords israélo-palestiniens. Au rythme où le Premier ministre israélien laisse aller les choses, cela risque de priver plusieurs années, voire ne jamais se faire, l'ultimatum israélien dissimulé mal le désarroi politique de son auteur, depuis son retour de Wye Plankation. M. Netanyahou donne en effet l'impression de l'admettre».

D'après un article publié dans Libération du 12 décembre, le Président américain est «houlé en Israël». «Le simple fait, poursuit le quotidien, que le chef de la première puissance mondiale se rende dans la bande de Gaza et le lendemain à Jérusalem, la ville natale du Christ, échoit de produire plusieurs années, voire ne jamais se faire, l'ultimatum israélien dissimulé mal le désarroi politique de son auteur, depuis son retour de Wye Plankation. M. Netanyahou donne en effet l'impression de l'admettre».

En Palestine, la semaine passée a connu le meurtre d'un employé municipal arabe et des affrontements entre les soldats israéliens et des manifestants qui réclamaient la libération des prisonniers politiques palestiniens détenus par Israël. Ces événements, selon Le Monde du 12 décembre sont un «brutal regain de tension, dix jours avant la visite de

Nahed Khloof

Une poignée de mains diplomatiques qui ne change en rien le glissement de la politique régionale américaine



Les larmes de Madeleine Albright

Ce fut le seul réel moment d'émotion de la visite de Bill Clinton à Gaza: des larmes de Madeleine Albright se remplissaient de larmes. «Ton père serait très fier de toi», a ajouté Bill Clinton. Le père de Nihad est en prison à perpétuité en Israël pour meurtre d'un Israélien, celui de Sahar pour avoir tué un collaborateur palestinien. La question de la libération des prisonniers politiques est la plus délicate du moment, qui provoque violentes émeutes en Cisjordanie. Benjamin Netanyahou a fait savoir qu'Israël remplirait ses engagements pris en vertu de l'accord de Wye River en libérant 250 prisonniers, des droits communs pour la plupart, mais s'est refusé à libérer des militants d'organisations islamistes ou des auteurs d'assassinats. Les Palestiniens

en sanglots. «Non, pas une seule seconde», a répondu le président, tandis que les yeux de Madeleine Albright se remplissaient de larmes. «Ton père serait très fier de toi», a ajouté Bill Clinton. Le père de Nihad est en prison à perpétuité en Israël pour meurtre d'un Israélien, celui de Sahar pour avoir tué un collaborateur palestinien. La question de la libération des prisonniers politiques est la plus délicate du moment, qui provoque violentes émeutes en Cisjordanie. Benjamin Netanyahou a fait savoir qu'Israël remplirait ses engagements pris en vertu de l'accord de Wye River en libérant 250 prisonniers, des droits communs pour la plupart, mais s'est refusé à libérer des militants d'organisations islamistes ou des auteurs d'assassinats. Les Palestiniens



Un Président américain très ému, Madeleine Albright au bord des larmes

considèrent que 900 des 2.000 prisonniers «sécuritaires» en Israël ne sont ni l'un ni l'autre. Les prisonniers ont entamé une grève de la faim de protestation.

Associated Press

Du neuf dans Le Jourdain

Vous avez aimé ou détesté un article ou un dossier? Envoyez vos réactions par mél à: le-jourdain@eudoramail.com Une rubrique «Courrier des lecteurs» devrait ainsi voir le jour dans nos colonnes.

The Star Stadium

Edited by Abdul-Hamid Addasi

Pan-Arab Games update

15-31 August, 1999

Jordanian Participation in Asian Games: Successes in Taekwondo, disappointment after Khwaldeh's case

Amman (Star)—The first week of Jordanian participation in the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok: Successes in Taekwondo crowned by three silver medals and a bronze medal. However, Jordan's weightlifter Ayed Khwaldeh, who is one of Jordan's favorites to win gold medals in the upcoming Pan Arab Games which will be held in Amman next year, was suspended for taking a banned medicine.

Three silver medals, one bronze in Taekwondo

BANGKOK—Jordan's Taekwondo team won three silver medals and a bronze medal in the Taekwondo competition in the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok. The number of medals was equivalent to the number of medals won in the Asian Games held in Korea back in 1986.

Jordan's silver medals were obtained by Ibrahim Kamal in the Men's heavy weight, Alaa Kutkut in 63-67 kg category and Hussein Al-Tahla in 78-84 kg category. The bronze medal was obtained by Mohammed Sabri in 73-78 kg category.

Other Jordanian participants, like Luma Abo Judum, reached the quarter finals while others were out of the competition. The Koreans were the most unbeatable counterparts.

One of our best performances in Taekwondo was by Ibrahim Kamal who won a silver medal in the Men's heavy weight.

Kamal was very near to clinch the golden medal, when he lost the final round with Kim Je-young (South Korea) by 7-3.

Kamal defeated Vietnamese Nguyen Van Hung 2-1 in the semi.



Cho Hyang Mi of S.Korea delivers a kick to Alaa Kutkut of Jordan.

ing the West Asian Games in Tehran and during another championship in Algeria last year. He claimed that he was unaware of the fact that the medicine contained a banned substance.

Jordanian delegation officials, ordered his return home last Wednesday. He is expected to serve a two-year suspension, and will therefore miss the 9th Pan-Arab Games to be held in Jordan next year.

Khwaldeh was the first Jordanian to win three bronze medals in one event at the 8th Pan-Arab Games in Beirut last summer.

He was expelled from Turkey's International Championship which was held two months ago for failing to fit the required weight.



Alaa Kutkut shares the podium with the champions 63-67 kg category

Moreover, Alaa Kutkut surprised sports viewers when she won the silver medal in 63-67 kg category. She lost her final match 3-1 with World Champion Cho Hyang Mi of Korea.

After a difficult match, Kutkut was able to defeat Thai's Huwang Yan by 4-2.

It was the best achievement for Kutkut who showed mastery and determination.

Khwaldeh expelled after failing drug test

BANGKOK—Jordan's top weightlifter, Ayed Jasser Khwaldeh, was expelled after becoming the first athlete to fail a drugs test at the 13th Asian Games.

Games officials said Ayed Jasser Khwaldeh was expelled out of the athletes' village after testing positive for the banned diuretic triamterene in a random test.

"Although he came seventh in the competition, we asked him to leave the village today," spokeswoman Valerie McKenzie told a media briefing.

Khwaldeh, 25 years, who finished seventh in the men's 56kg class on Monday, admitted the offense at a meeting between the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) officials and the Jordanian team.

Khwaldeh said his Chinese coach has instructed him to take the medicine dur-



Khwaldeh

Images speak of Ibrahim's story of success



Cameo Zaire named Endurance's Best

ABU DHABI—Cameo Zaire, from the Al Wathba Stables which are owned by President Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, was declared the "Best Conditioned Horse" after Thursday's World Endurance Championship.

The nine-year-old Pure-bred Arabian horse was ridden by Musallam Salem Al Amri, who finished seventh in the ride. Ten horses who have completed the ride are nominated for the award by the veterinary commission, and the gray gelding was judged the best.

Cameo Zaire, an Australian-bred, has been a constant partner of Al Amri in his rides. Al Amri rode Cameo Zaire to a thrilling win in the 160-kilometer Spirit of Sherwood Pathfinder in the UK in last August.

Cameo Zaire's selection for the prestigious award completed a brilliant championship for the horse, who had all six of their riders finish in the top 20 positions.

Unfortunately, only two of those six, Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum and Abdullah Bilhab, who finished third and 17th respectively, were nominated for the team event.

New Zealand won the team gold, with three of their riders totaling a combined time of 33:14:27. According to the FEI list of winners, 77 out of the 173 riders who started completed the ride. Valerie Kanavy on High Winds Jedi was timed

at nine hours and seven seconds, just five seconds ahead of second placed Fausto Fiorucci of Italy.

Final results (Top 20):

■ Valerie Kanavy-USA (High Winds Jedi) Time 11:00:07

■ Fausto Fiorucci-Italy (Faris Jahbar) 09:00:12

■ Dausuke Yasunaga-Japan (Natsu) 09:05:09

■ Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid-UAE (Razia d'Alauze) 09:25:22

■ Mohammed Ali Al Shafar-UAE (Abrock Theodore) 09:25:22

■ Wendy Meredini-USA (Fire Mt. Fikka) 09:54:21

■ Musallam Salem Al Amri-UAE (Cameo Zaire) 09:56:00

■ Ali Mohd. Al Muhairy-UAE (Abjar Kadar) 09:56:01

■ Christine Janzen-Canada (Tais) 10:06:57

■ Sharon Parker-Australia (Stamper Gimis) 10:15:55

■ Majid Killa Perringerard (Varoussa) 10:18:08

■ Johan Du Toit-South Africa (Dunay-Boy) 10:18:12

■ Miguel Villa Ubach-Spain (Diango) 10:22:03

■ Atta Mohammed-Qatar (Cinco) 10:22:23

■ Carlos Augusto Larre-Argentina (Misi) 10:24:08

■ Jennifer Gilbertson-Australia (QA Deja Vu) 10:27:09

■ Saeed Munanah-UAE (Dayara Hazim) 10:40:56

■ Abdulla Bilhab-UAE (Cass) 10:40:58

■ Darla Westlake-USA (MC Rams Z) 10:57:14

■ Luciano Di Francesco (Peletos) 11:01:42

Team championship:

■ New Zealand-Alan McCaughan (Tonka) 11:03:36

■ Jenny Hean (Simbar) 11:03:37

■ John Stevenson (Taralea Raja)

11:07:14. Total time: 33:14:27.

■ USA-Wendy Meredini (Fire Mt. Fikka) 09:54:21

■ Darla Westlake (MC Rams Z) 10:57:14

■ Shirley Delsart (KJ Destination) 12:40:01. Total: 33:31:27

■ Australia-Shannon Parker (Stamper Gimis) 10:15:55

■ Margaret Wade (Toothies Red) 11:48:13

■ Gayle Holmes (Faraway Verdict) 12:37:27. Total time: 34:41:35.

Best Conditioned Horse: Cameo Zaire ridden by Musallam Salem Al Amri (UAE), who came 7th in the ride. ■

Asian soccer official calls for boycott of 2002 World Cup

BANGKOK, Thailand—Asian countries, including co-hosts Japan and South Korea, might boycott the 2002 World Cup in protest over the international soccer federation's qualification rules, a leading official said Sunday.

The president of the Olympic Council of Asia Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah, said the two nations would be expected to boycott their own World Cup if action was taken.

FIFA has decided to cut into two the number of Asian teams, which will participate in the 2002 World Cup, from qualifying rounds, down from the 1998 total of three places plus a play off chance. With Japan and South Korea getting automatic qualification as hosts, the Asian contingent would be the same as

the World Cup in France this year, where Iran joined the top three qualifiers from the Asian zone.

"We will boycott the World Cup unless FIFA changes its decision," Sheikh Al-Sabah, president of the Kuwait soccer federation, told the Associated Press on Sunday. "We think it's not fair. We had three and a half chances at the last World Cup and now they're offering two. We have 50 percent of the World Cup sponsors coming from our region."

The FIFA executive committee, which met in Zurich on the two places to 43 Asian federation countries.

There would seem to be little prospect of Japan and South Korea giving up the chance to play in their own World Cup, and Sheikh Al-

Sabah admitted that they would be disappointed with a difficult decision.

"Don't know if Japan and South Korea would follow. It's their own decision. Maybe they would be happy taking part, but they should realize they are part of the Asian confederation and they will remain that after the World Cup."

The Asian Football Confederation's 17-member executive committee met in Amman on the two places to 43 Asian federation countries.

There would seem to be little prospect of Japan and South Korea giving up the chance to play in their own World Cup, and Sheikh Al-

Football Roundup

ENGLISH PREMIER league match reports—Villa fought back after a 2-0 defeat to beat Arsenal 2-2 at Villa Park. Dennis Bergkamp fired Arsenal to a 2-0 half-time lead with goals in the 14th and 45th minutes.

However, Villa came back in the second half with two goals in three minutes, by Julian Joachim and Dion Dublin.

The team was rewarded when free-scoring Dublin grabbed the winner kick with eight minutes left.

Wimbledon (1) Liverpool (0) Robbie Earle scrambled the only goal after 48 minutes for Wimbledon, as it battled on to another victory over Liverpool.

Wimbledon Goal keeper Neil Sullivan managed to keep his goal clean by stopping Michael Owen's poorly-struck penalty with 11 minutes left. Moreover, Andy Roberts bundled Paul Ince to the ground, and fans were somehow happy.

Blackburn Rovers (0) Newcastle United (1)

Newcastle United, missing injured Alan Shearer, were pleased to escape from Ewood Park with one point.

Kevin Davies went close for the hosts when he rattled the bar in the second half and defender Jeff Kenna smacked the post with a penalty soon afterwards.

Derby County (2) Chelsea (2)

Dean Sturridge scored a 90th minute equalizer to earn Derby County a share of the points, after Chelsea had come from 1-0 down to dominate.

Argentine defender Horacio Carbonari put Derby ahead after 26 minutes, but Chelsea managed to equalize through Tore Andre Flo in the 55th.

Uruguayan Gustavo Poyet put the visitors in front four minutes later and Chelsea looked as though they had done enough to head the table before Sturridge intervened in the final seconds.

Everton (1) Southampton (0)

Ivory Coast striker Ibrahim Bakayoko scored his first goal for Everton in some style as the hosts beat bottom side Southampton at Goodison Park.

The four million pounds Montpellier, who signed a four million pound (\$6.74 million) contract in October, picked up the ball 35 meters out before guiding it past Paul Jones in the goal.

Leicester City (3) Nottingham Forest (1)

Dutch striker Pierre van Hooijdonk put the visitors ahead after 14 minutes at Filbert Street, but Emile Heskey



grabbed an equalizer four minutes before the break.

A Man Elliott penalty 10 minutes into the second half put Leicester 2-1 up. Van Hooijdonk was sent off in the 41st minute United were on the back foot. Campbell pulled one back 20 minutes from the end before his last minute equalizer.

Middlesbrough (1) West Ham United (0)

With Paul Gascoigne at the heart of everything, Middlesbrough looked impressive early on and deserved their lead when Brian Deane scored off an Andy Townsend corner in the 40th minute. West Ham United fought back well and were unlucky not to gain the draw when John Hartson clattered the bar.

Sheffield Wednesday (3) Charlton Athletic (0)

Sheffield Wednesday dominated and Andy Booth's shot on the turn put them ahead after 13 minutes. Benito Carbone curled a shot past Sasa Ilic for 2-0 in the 64th minute and Peter Rudi completed the rout 13 minutes from time.

Tottenham Hotspur (2) Manchester United (2)

A 90th minute equalizer from Sol Campbell gave Tottenham the draw but the result was still enough to put

half after Uruguayan defender Paolo Montero, was sent off for a second bookable offense. Juve has now lost five league matches compared to two matches last season.

Lazio (5) Sampdoria (2)

Yugoslav Sinisa Mijatovic scored a hat-trick of free kicks while Francesco Palmieri replied with two goals from the penalty spot. Mijatovic's compatriot Dejan Stankovic brought the dead-ball battle to an end with a goal in open play before Marcelo Salas added Lazio's beautiful fifth, weaving past two defenders and burying a left-footed shot in the bottom corner of the net.

AC Milan (1) Vicenza (0)

Milan had mid-fielder Massimo Ambrosini sent off for faking a foul in the Vicenza penalty area, his second bookable offense. Milan rallied though, and George Weah's fourth league goal of the season was enough to move it into second in the standings.

Parma (1) AS Roma (1)

Serie A's meanest defense met the league's most prolific attack and a draw was the result, with both sides remaining tied at 23 points in third and fourth place. Hernan Crespo grabbed his eighth of the season with a striker's poach from close range and Roma's Carmine Gautieri scored his second goal in as many matches.

Perugia (2) Cagliari (1)

The action began in the last few minutes when Midfielder Daniele Berretta pulled the visitors level at 1-1 with an 89th minute strike, but Perugia's Riccardo Maspero found time to head home an injury-time winner. Cagliari's disappointment was compounded by the late dismissal of defender Francesco Zanonecelli, for a second bookable offense.

Udinese (0) Inter Milan (1)

The Roberto Baggio-Ronaldo partnership gave Inter yet another last-gasp result. Baggio fed the Brazilian with a short pass after a scramble on the edge of the Udinese box on 89 minutes. Ronaldo flicked the ball past Luigi Turci to give coach Mircea Lucescu his first league victory at Inter.

Venezia (0) Piacenza (0)

A thoroughly forgettable match between two of Serie A's prime relegation candidates. Few chances, no goals, no dismissals and five bookings.

Star Online

<http://star.arabia.com>

for

17 DECEMBER 1998

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Dedicated telecommunications exhibition For region's Market: Middle East Telecoms 99

THE DUBAI World Trade Centre has announced that the first Middle East International Telecommunications Exhibition (M.E. Telecoms) will be held between 2 and 4 March 1999. The show, which will be held simultaneously with Cabsat '99, the cable, satellite and broadcast show, acknowledges the need for a specialized exhibition for the telecommunications sector. Previously held as part of the Gulf Information Technology Exhibition (Gitex), the telecommunications exhibition will be launched as Middle East Telecoms to provide a unique opportunity for companies to meet potential customers and decision-makers in a positive and professional business environment.

"The need for a dedicated telecommunications exhibition has never been greater," said Geoffrey Booy, acting manager exhibitions, DWTC. "The allocation of an area for Telecoms at both Gitex '96 and '97 was of great benefit to the exhibitors for this specified sector. But in 1999, the Dubai World Trade Centre, through Middle East Telecoms, will provide the opportunity for leading telecom companies to offer a range of state-of-the-art telecom products in a professional environment solely dedicated to telecommunications," he added.

Middle East Telecoms will be the launch pad of a range of new and innovative solutions for one of the fastest growing telecommunications

markets. The Middle East and the region immediately beyond has in recent years come to represent an enormous and lucrative market for the telecommunications industry. In a market dominated by the PTTs, there continues to be significant growth with major corporations looking to upgrade their existing systems, both mobile and terrestrial. Over the next three years, Middle East countries will be investing approximately \$6 billion to develop their telecommunication infrastructure, without including growth in the personal telecommunication equipment market. Middle East Telecoms '99 will be open to trade and business professionals to maintain the professional integrity of the show for exhibitors.

Year 2000 bugs in Microsoft Windows 98

IT HAS been reported that several Year 2000 bugs have been detected in Windows 98. Although Microsoft Windows 98 is one of the most aggressively and thoroughly tested products in history, it seems that the operating system is not Y2K immune. Microsoft found these bugs and claimed that they are not harmful, and that the majority of users were unlikely to spot them or run into them. These bugs don't cause data loss or damage. In any case, Microsoft has posted a software update on its website to correct the problems. It had previously issued corrections to Windows 98 to fix other bugs, or "issues," as Microsoft calls them.

It is important to note that Microsoft ran Windows 98 tests with tens of thousands of people, all over the world. Microsoft went to great lengths to ensure that Win98 was millennium compliant. However, the fact that a couple of bugs slipped through should be a source of worry for the computer industry, which is coming to terms with the massive Year 2000 problem and barely managing to control it. If Microsoft can't take care of the problem in new software

releases, how can decades old software systems be corrected? Some of the details regarding the Y2K problems with Windows 98 are as follows. If a computer is started at the precise fraction of a second when the date changes, the computer's system clock could display the wrong time or date. Also, a particular technique for resetting a date to February 29 for a leap year could result in February 29 being displayed for other years. This is only a display problem, which means that it can't be applied to stored data.

'Baladna' goes online

AMMAN—Arabia.On.Line and Global One last Saturday announced the official launching of 'Baladna' on the World Wide Web, which can be accessed at <http://www.baladna.com.jo>. After months of development, the site's programmers have made it possible for visitors to follow current local news throughout Jordan and to get all the information pertaining to Jordan on the site—one of the most refreshing Jordanian sites on the Web.

The site contains various sections and services which are easily accessible to visitors. The daily front page offers a cover story tackling an important local issue, as well as news, sports, business, and living sections.

Under the section entitled 'Baladna's essentials' on the front page, there is a phone directory including numbers for hospitals, cultural centers, and hotels, among other important locales.

Visitors can also organize their weekends by checking out the cultural events occurring all around Jordan and by taking a look at the updated weather forecast.

For those who are interested in book and film reviews, Baladna has a special section dedicated to presenting interesting and thoughtful commentaries. In addition, there is a special section for Dr. Suzan Nsour, who posts various medical opinions and answers readers' questions.

There are also special forums for discussion on Baladna, and visitors can voice their opinions on any one of the 29 conferences featured there. People can also use Baladna's classifieds to advertise their products for free.

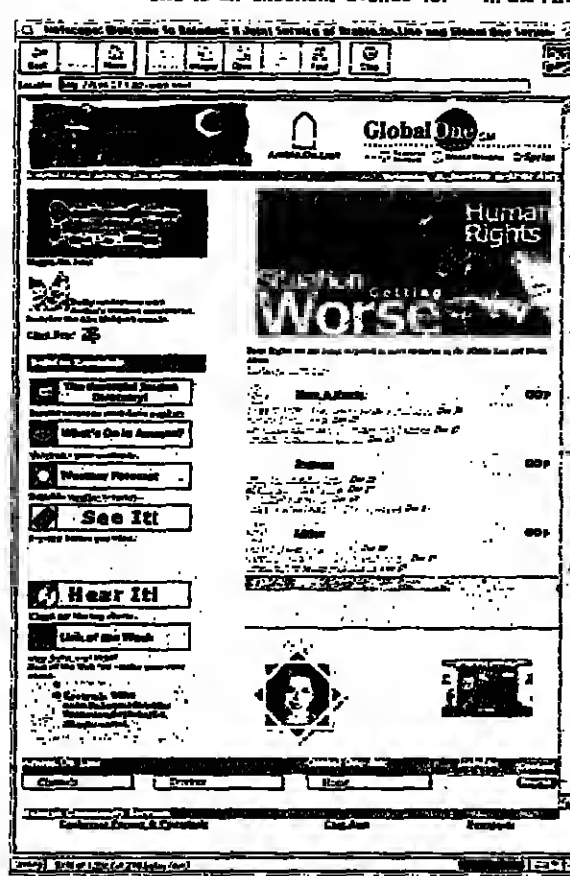
To add a light-hearted touch to the site, Baladna has invited the well-known cartoonist, Imad Al Hajjaj, creator of Abu Mahjoob character to publish

his work on the site. Baladna has prepared a special archive for this purpose, in addition to some of Hajjaj's unpublished works. Al Hajjaj site also contains his personal resume, message board for discussion, and his e-mail address.

Advertising opportunities are also possible. Because of Baladna's huge popularity, the site is an excellent avenue for

its service, located at www.arabia.com.jo, contains by far the largest single electronic reservoir of data available to the public anywhere about the Arab world.

In addition, Arabia.On.Line is a pioneer in providing business development and Internet consulting to large, middle, and small size corporate clients in the Arab world.



Global One Communications (Jordan) Ltd is the first and largest data communications Jordanian company formed in February 1996, and was one of the Amman MENA summit featured projects. The company is the leading data communications provider in Jordan.

Global One (Jordan) is a joint venture between Global One (International), and ASAS Trade and Investment Company. Global One (International) is the alliance of between three of the largest telecommunications companies worldwide, namely Deutsche Telekom, France Telecom, and Sprint USA. ASAS is a Jordanian investment company owned by several

partners, including the Arab Bank, the second largest Bank in the Middle East, and other major companies. Currently Global One provides the business and Consumer markets in Jordan with the most advanced data communications consultation and services. These services include Global Internet and Global X.25 dial up, leased line and corporate mail services and solutions. Global Frame Relay services Global One Communications (Jordan) Ltd, has served a large number of customers from day one of operations, and now has more than 6000 customer base, making it the largest data communications service provider in Jordan, served by 55 highly qualified Jordanian employees.

Few tech-women in the Jordan computer sector!

LOOKING THROUGH the profiles of Jordan's computer and information technology companies, you can't help but notice that there are very few women who work in top management positions!

In fact, if we were to conduct a rough survey of Jordan's computer companies, there are only three or four companies which are headed by women, out of over two hundred companies, which is very little! It is somewhat strange, to see a country like Jordan, where women enjoy full civil and economic liberties, having a small number of women leading the technology sector. One would expect that some 25 companies, at least, are headed by women, but this is not the case!

Moving down the managerial ladder, in marketing and sales management positions there are more women, but still not enough. Looking at the technical side of computer companies, you will hardly find any women at all; except in odd maintenance engineering, in some of Jordan's largest computer firms which number less than thirty companies.

So, is there a trend here that needs to be studied? It may seem that women are not getting their fair chance in the local computer market, but this isn't the actual problem. The real problem lies in a social trend—I expect this to cause some outrage among some female readers—which is that women tend to stop working once they get married; or that they tend to select less demanding jobs with less hours! I know that there must be a whole team of feminists planning to assault me now, but this is not my opinion. It is the simple fact sounded by all managers and owners of computer companies I talked to. Maybe they are anti-feminists or male chauvinists! Well, they are not.

Anyway, the women who are running companies in Jordan are among the most experienced computer and technology professionals in the country! They have been in the field for around two decades. They enjoy much respect and are shining examples of superior management, which should encourage more women to pursue top management careers in computing, and maybe start companies of their own! In any case, this whole issue is a simple observation, which many must have wondered about one time or the other. So here is a call to all Jordanian women with computer or related engineering or marketing degrees: join the computer and information technology sector in Jordan. It needs your input.

Year 2000 is the 'hot' topic

EVERYBODY IS talking about it, even people who are not involved. The Year 2000 hysteria is set to reach its peak as 1999 begins. Already, in Jordan, actions are underway to handle the problem; but it is so interesting to note that even the top computer software companies in the world can't keep their own house in order. Microsoft announced that Windows 98 was not 100% Year 2000 compliant, and contained a couple of related glitches. That is amazing, considering this operating system was introduced a few months ago and was designed in the post-Year 2000 scare era.

With people like Microsoft getting things wrong, how can we expect everyone else to get it right! Another point I've been hearing recently, which is very interesting, is with regard to the tens of thousands of people employed in the United States solely to handle the Year 2000 problem. What will happen to all of them after January 1, 2000? Are they going to be left without a job, and simply fired!

Without a doubt, in 1999, the Year 2000 problem and its ramifications are the thing to look out for throughout the year and up to the millennium. Sit tight, it's not going to be an easy ride!

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Classic toys, the evergreen choice for gift-giving

By Peter Jensen

DOES THIS sound familiar? The holidays are over and your children are bored with their latest toys—all of which are based on the latest TV shows and movies.

Mesmerized by television commercials, they had yearned for these plastic and electronic gizmos. But here they are: scraps on the toy heap.

What do the youngsters reach for instead? Maybe their old Brio wooden trains, or that Tinkertoy set that was passed down from older siblings. Legos, Barbie dolls, the Erector set, Lincoln Logs. Could it be the old Slinky fascinates?

If this has happened to you, rest assured you are not alone. Your children have demonstrated what child-development experts have long known: newer isn't necessarily better when it comes to toys.

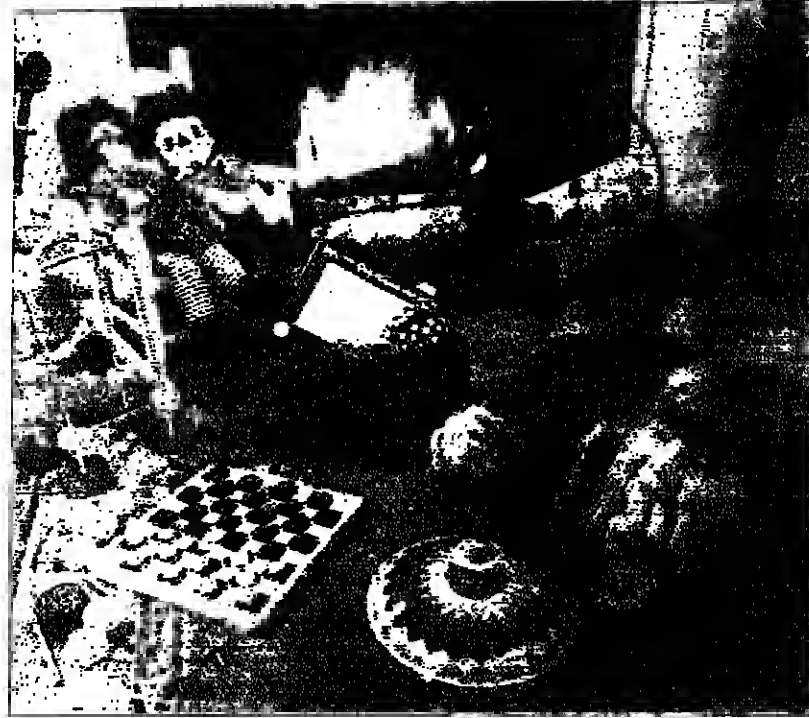
As consumers once again flood toy stores in search of holiday gifts for their youngest relatives and friends, the smartest may be the ones who search for the familiar: the classic toys they played with as kids.

"Sometimes we get so caught up in the technology of today, we forget about the simple joys of playing with balloons or kites," says Dr. Stevanne Auerbach, author and toy-industry consultant. "Kids get brainwashed by commercials. You need to get children back in touch with the old-fashioned."

Somebody must be listening to that advice because toy retailers and manufacturers have already begun to see a much greater interest in the classics this year.

"Parents are disappointed with the limited toys that are hyped on TV, and the child plays with (them) once or twice," says Jeff Franklin, owner of the toy stores in Severna Park and Annapolis, Md. "Classics have always been a substantial part of our business but that part of our market is growing, too." Old reliables like Brio trains and Playmobile play sets are enjoying a record year in sales at his stores.

Sally Lesser, owner of Henry Bear's Park, a toy retailer in Cambridge, Mass., says parents have discovered that classic toys are a better value. Time-tested, the toys are certain to capture a child's imagination for years, she says.



Christina Morris, age 5, plays with some of America's most popular classic toys.

"Lights and sounds are helpful and fun—I can go for them—but the real value in play can usually be found in classic toys," says Lesser, who also serves as president of the American Specialty Toy Retailing Association.

Whether it is baby-boomer nostalgia or a backlash against the mass-market licensed products that still dominate toy sales, consumers are snapping up a variety of classic toys—some of which would be familiar to their great grandparents.

At Chicago-based Radio Flyer Inc., two out of three of this season's top-selling wagons are old designs; the classic "Model 18" steel wagon and the "Town and Country," with the added wooden sides.

"Hot things come and go, but a Radio Flyer is something people can depend on," says Robert Basin, Radio Flyer's president and grandson of the 81-year-old company's founder. "It's a classic because it has intrinsic value."

In the northwest Pennsylvania town of Kane, Dick Bly restarted 10 years

ago, a classic toy company that went out of business in the mid-1960s. The company, named Holgate Toy, has seen steady growth each year since.

Doesn't sound familiar? Maybe you've heard of their maple wood creations: the Rocking Color Cone (a 1959 creation), the Bingo Bed (the bench created in 1934), or Lullaby Ring Bed (a classic since 1948).

"Children are no different today than 60 years ago," says Bly. "They don't need the whistles and bells. They have imagination."

Classic toy makers say one characteristic that often distinguishes their products is simplicity of design. Another is that the toy was a best-seller—at least when first released—and then held on for 25 years or longer. Exhibit A: Etch A Sketch, the mechanical drawing toy that was all the rage when it was first produced in 1960. Today, its sales are good enough to be described as "warm," but probably not "hot."

More exciting for fans of classic

toys is the public's rediscovery of the yo-yo, a classic, if there ever was one. Duncan Yo-yo went bankrupt in 1965. But the product has inexplicably made a big comeback in the 1990s—thanks to Flambeau Products, which bought Duncan's brand name and still has the company's original plastic molds.

"I'm so glad they caught on again. I've been talking about them for 10 years," says Auerbach, author of "Dr. Toy's Smart Play: How to Raise a Child With High Play Quotient." "It's one of my absolute favorites."

Auerbach, who also writes a syndicated newspaper column about toys from her San Francisco home, says what turns a popular toy into a true classic is its ability to challenge a child's development.

A youngster might need his parents' help to play with Lincoln Logs at first. Later, he'll be able to build a cabin on his own. Perhaps months after that, he'll be able to use the interlocking logs to create bridges or other structures, Auerbach says.

Compare that to an action figure or video game tied in with a Saturday-morning TV show. Such toys call on children to play with them in a set way imitating what they've seen on the tube—and that can get boring fast.

"You should look for durability and longevity in a toy," Auerbach says. "The toys that are hyped on TV usually don't have it."

Dr. Richard Chase, an adjunct professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University, says the fact that classic toys address a child's developmental needs should put them high on holiday gift lists.

Even something seemingly as simple as a Slinky can instruct "restless young minds on how the world works through mechanical action," he says.

"Classics become classics because they are toys with complex and fulfilling play patterns," says Chase, who is also president of a New York consulting and toy-research firm, Child Growth and Development Corp.

"There's a unique quality in these products that have captured a child's imagination, their skill or their ability to feel good about themselves."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Humor! Laugh longer

■ Laughing gas was first used during a tooth extraction in 1844. To me, laughing gas was a miracle drug. It kept the patients laughing when the dentist pulled their teeth out, and it kept the dentist laughing when the patients pulled their wallets out.

■ It was reported the other day that a new brand name of dates have appeared on the market in Egypt recently. The new Monica Lewinsky date is now grown in Aswan, in the southern region of the country.



SCRAPBOOK

Clairvoyance: A growing phenomenon in Jordan

By Kofi Attah
Special to The Star

WITHIN THE aura of the supernatural, man's unquenched thirst for the unknown is endless. Witchcraft, soothsayers, and horoscopes are among the ways where man sought his destiny. Nevertheless, conjuring spirits isn't the only way. There is a human dimension involved in such practices. Believe it or not, there are people with super powers. They can know your family name, your work, your past and your future! The strange thing, however, is that people from different social classes tend to believe in soothsayers, and some pay hundreds for a little help.

"It is estimated that 70 percent of people around the world are clinically depressed," says a well-known British psychologist. As a result, some societies are seeking help from the "other world," as a result of their everyday frustrations.

This phenomenon is spreading in developing countries like Lebanon, where people are still recovering from the outcomes of war. Today, clairvoyance is becoming more recognized than ever in Jordan. It moved on from the rural areas to urban cities.

The bad news is that there are no means to control such practices, since they are held secretly. It is commonly practiced by women who claim to have the ability to read your mind. Furthermore, many believe that soothsayers are really talented. They have answers to many unraveled mysteries.

Some even depend on those psychics to help them in making crucial decisions in their lives. Your marriage, wealth, business, and health can be determined by a soothsayer's words! On the other hand, many aren't convinced with the mambo jumbo of magic. Dr. Fadi Haddad, a surgeon in Amman, thinks that clairvoyance is only an illusion, and those who practice it are violating moral and religious codes. "People who are spiritually lost or psychologically ill, tend to believe in magic as their savior."

"It is a big relief to know something about your future," Ahmed, a university student said. He added that sometimes he waits for Tunisian gypsies, who offer their metaphysical powers by reading his palms, or predicting his destiny.

Miss Neestine, a secretary, confesses that she is fully aware of false information. At the same time, many things turn out to be true for her.

Many soothsayers depend on coffee cups, where your destiny can be interpreted through the thick coffee layers stained on the cup when turned upside down. Superstition is part of the game. Some hang a pair of miniature shoes to cast away evil spirits!

Others have the weirdest beliefs. A bride may take a lock of her hair along with a piece from her wedding dress and ties them on a donkey's tail! This act is believed to make her husband obedient and faithful forever! Moreover, a sheep is slaughtered and its blood is symbolically sprinkled on a newly constructed building or a new vehicle to keep away envious eyes. According to Islam, magic is a forbidden practice, which is considered to be a direct blasphemy. However, many superstitious beliefs remain dominant. Duk Al Khashb (Knock on wood) is a living example. All in all, astrology is becoming a flourishing business, attracting many people all over the world. This is thanks to computers, which opened doors for astrologers and psychics to roam around the world.

Clairvoyance in Jordan is defying skeptics. Many individuals are interested in knowing more and more secrets about their past, present and future. It is a tempting door where other dimensions are still unraveled.

Jewelry artist Azza Fahmi exhibits once again in Amman

EGYPTIAN JEWELRY artist Azza Fahmi held another exhibition in Amman in Al Mashraq gallery.

Fahmi is exhibiting a collection of her traditional Islamic jewelry.

The artist has started off as an interior designer and worked later as a book designer. She became fascinated with the designs of jewelry and embarked on a full-time career. Fahmi learnt the profession in the traditional Khan Al Khalili Souk, in Cairo.

Azza admits that she is inspired by the Pharonic, Islamic, Arab and Roman cultures. She enjoys the jewelry worn by women in the rural areas, which according to her, has "important environmental significance".

Fahmi was influenced by shapes of flowers, leaves, precious stones, and combines gold and silver in her designs.

Azza opened her own gallery "Al Aina" which became one of the most distinguished exhibition halls in Cairo. The artist has become internationally renowned with several public figures wearing her jewelry such as HM Queen Noor of Jordan.

The artist has opened a jewelry art center where she teaches young students the profession of jewelry-making.

Azza creates beautiful and exotic designs of jewelry which are traditional with a touch of modernity to suite the modern life of today.



Iraqi models display the 1999 collection of fashion designer Abdul-Hamid al-Shabaka during a fashion show at Saddam art centre late 11 December. Egyptian designer, Shabaka, presented his Egyptian-inspired Iraqi style haute couture to an audience of Iraqis to a display which threw together an unusual mix of cultures and styles.



A scene from the new animated film from DreamWorks Pictures, "The Prince of Egypt" shows Moses (center foreground, L) and Ramesses (center foreground, R). The film will open in the United States and over forty countries on 18 December.

Jewish slaves, who are meticulously portrayed by director Steven Spielberg, labor as they drag stones to Pharaoh in the animated film, "The Prince of Egypt." Spielberg continues his Zionist bias by implicitly showing that the Jews are the real architects of the pyramids.